

LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS

823  
M355ra  
v.1

Marsh

3 vols





# RAVENSCLIFFE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"EMILIA WYNDHAM," "THE WILMINGTONS," ETC.

So once it would have been—'tis so no more;

I have submitted to a new control:

A power is gone, which nothing can restore;

A deep distress hath humanised my soul.

WORDSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

COLBURN AND CO., PUBLISHERS,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

---

1851.

LONDON:  
PRINTED BY WILLIAM TYLER,  
BOLT-COURT.

823

M355 ra

v. 1

# RAVENSLIFFE.

---

## CHAPTER I.

“Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,—  
These three alone lend life to sovereign power:  
Yet not for power . . . .  
. . . . But to live by law,  
Acting the law we live by without fear;  
And because right is right, to follow right,  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

TENNYSON.

“You have insulted my creed—you have  
insulted my country—you have insulted  
my family—you have insulted myself!—  
Take that—and that—and that—and  
that!——”

And quick as lightning fell the flashing  
horsewhip upon the shoulders of the  
wretched and degraded man. The whip

VOL. I.

B

was snapped into fifty pieces, and thrown triumphantly over his head ; and then, with a shout of wild mocking laughter, the handsome young Irishman flung away, and left the victim of his passion standing there alone—though, alas! surrounded by a crowd of astonished spectators, for it was high noon.

The unclouded sun at his meridian was shining in full splendour through the canopy of green trees which arches the broad walk at the back of St. John's College, Cambridge, and the walk was filled with gownsmen of every condition and degree, from heads of colleges to sizars. Undergraduates, masters of arts, grave professors, and wild young pupils. Gyps and laundresses, townsmen and gownsmen. The day was magnificent, and the walks were full.

The victim of this outrageous burst of passion was a tall, thin, gaunt-looking young man, with straight dark hair arranged round his face in something of the puritan cut. His features were harsh and stern, his gait ungraceful, his eye deep-set and lower-

ing. Such was the usual appearance of this man at the best; you may guess how he looked now — insulted and degraded before the assembled University.

He stood there in the broad sunlight, which almost blazed upon the gravel that hot and bright day, a dark figure, cast into the strongest, most dreadful relief, by the surrounding glare of light. Perfectly alone, in one strong sense of the word, for the crowd had instinctively retreated from the circuit of the whirling horsewhip, and stood there—terrific circle! all eyes fixed upon the wretched man.

His antagonist, the young Irishman, had, as I have told you, broken through the press, and had, with loud shouts of triumphant laughter, disappeared; followed by a few of his friends, their scornful cachinnations serving as a sort of chorus to the leading voice.

He, the attacker, went away not unaccompanied by the applauding voice of the multitude—he, the injured, stood there perfectly unsupported, and by himself. He was one nobody loved.

A few moments he remained immovable, as if turned to stone; his head bent down upon his breast, his eyes fixed upon the earth—something fearful in the dark cloud upon his face. Then he raised his head a very little, and slowly moved away. As he did so, a low hiss followed him. It was from the rude boys and fellows of the commoner sort; for the undergraduates looked on in a kind of appalled silence.

There is something in seeing this dreadful humiliation inflicted upon a man, which cows the very heart of honour, and makes the blood tingle, and the hair crisp, as if one had been present at some act of excessive physical cruelty.

The heads of houses and authorities stood by with yet other feelings. There was a very considerable sense of indignation aroused against the dashing young Irishman, and the words “expulsion,” or at least “rustication,” were murmured about amongst them.

---

Marcus Fitzroy and his friends met in his rooms. "You'll have a bullet through your brains for it, see if you haven't," said one.

"He send a bullet through my brains! a contemptible scoundrel! I wish he'd try—I wish he'd give me the opportunity to send one through his dastardly heart! No—no—he won't fight—he can't fight. His *principles* will not allow him to fight! That's it. He may use his cursed tongue with impunity, he thinks—distil the venom of his black and detestable envy when and where he will—because he can't be brought to book—can't be called to a reckoning. His principles will not suffer him to fight! But he's got it!—He's got it!—He's got it for one while!"

And Marcus danced about the room with exultation. The young men who were present stood still and looked grave. There was something to their ideas so dreadful, in the vengeance which had been inflicted; something so doubly and trebly terrible when wrecked upon one so utterly helpless as the man who cannot fight—that



though they most cordially shared in the indignations and antipathies of their young friend, they stood there shocked and confounded. At last one of them, Berrington, said,

“ You don’t mean to assert positively that this fellow can’t and won’t fight? Yesterday he might have said and thought so. He won’t say and think so to-day. He is not a coward, whatever else he may be.”

“ Coward or no coward, what care I? I tell you he is a sneaking, backbiting, insulting, envious scoundrel. A venomous worm, that stings a man in the heel because he dare not strike him in the face. And he shelters himself—a pitiful rascal!—under his *principles*, if a man calls him to account! And he’s got a good thrashing,—a glorious, glorious thrashing. To lash his principles into him, or out of him—I care not a button which. I’ve had my revenge, and he may take his—or let it alone. It’s all one to me.”

---



He had darkened his rooms. The first thing he did when he entered was to tear down, rather than pull down, his blinds—to drag his curtains hastily across, to shut out the light of the sun, which seemed killing him. And then he began to walk up and down, up and down the room, like a wild beast in his den. His fists were clenched, his arms crossed tightly over his breast, his head bent down, his face towards the earth.

Oh the thunder-cloud that was upon his brow! A contest the most violent was raging within him. An insatiable desire—a rabid hunger for revenge, which words cannot describe—daggers and heavy-loaded sticks, and dark nights, and corners of lanes seemed to haunt his mental vision. To call his enemy out—to demand the satisfaction due to himself, as a gentleman, was a light, feeble measure of retribution in comparison with the vengeance for which he panted. He wanted to inflict something degrading, lowering, insulting, like that to which he had been subjected—

he wanted to have his adversary under his feet in the mire.

His was a fierce, violent nature. Passionate yet hard, fiery but cold—fearful and painful contrasts, aggravated not softened by the education he had received under an iron father and a rigid mother; stern by nature, and fanatical through prejudice and through principle—the education a Dominican inquisitor might have given in the bosom of a Protestant church; than which nothing in the form of religious teaching can perhaps be imagined more fearful.

From a child his passions, which had been extraordinary in their force, had been all driven in. His tenderer feelings chilled; every softer imagination blighted. His father and mother on earth had been cold, unsympathising, and severe; and he had been taught to look upon the Universal Father as on a stern though rigidly just Ruler, sitting there in His awful infallibility amidst scenes of misery and retribution. He had learnt to reverence and to fear—for this impassable justice excited his

reverence—but he had never been taught to love. He might be said never to have known what love was. Still he had strong principles. He had been reared in strong fixed principles, and was accustomed to obey them. What was right he did, partly from principle, partly from doggedness, partly from pride.—These three were twisted as it were together in that strong cord which bound him to his duty.

---

The savage part of his nature has had its hour. And now that whirlwind of rage and passion has passed away—and then comes a sterner struggle to be gone through.

As that extravagance of passion subsided, which upon such occasions lifts a man at once out of the limits of the Conventional—the Conventional once more asserted its claim to be heard; and, the satisfaction which, according to the custom of the society around him, such an insult demanded, began to present itself

in place of daggers, clubs, and dark lanes, as the proper vengeance to be sought. The necessity for calling him out, became the question.

But to call a man out to fight a duel he had been educated to consider, and had always been accustomed to consider, as an act of cold premeditated murder; heinous in the eye of God and contemptible in that of men.

As a deliberate flying in the face of the Lord of Life—and a cowardly submission to the indispensable and absurd constitutions of society—as a measure at once wicked and contemptible. He would have despised himself as much for the concession to a prejudice as he would have blamed himself for the commission of a crime.

And yet, in spite of all this, society is strong, though nature is strong too. A sense of public opinion, the feelings of our fellows, will, under such circumstances, make themselves felt, even with the most courageous and daring defiers of public opinion. And the desire to wipe out this

stain, in the only way by which, according to the notions of the young men around him, it could be wiped out, was vehement now.

This stormy contest of feelings lasted long. The intense desire to clear himself from disgrace—to resume his place among his fellows. In return for the mocking laughter which still rang in his ears—to confront his enemy, pistol levelled, in that dire contest wherein one of them should lie dead—he or his injurer—was almost overwhelming. Oh, how his soul thirsted for a meeting such as that in which either he should himself fall, closing his eyes at once upon a world which had become hateful to him—or should see that wild, beautiful, and excitable being, who presented himself even now to his imagination, as if surrounded, by a sort of glory—glory as of an avenging angel—a something lifted above common earth and common men—see that brilliant creature stretched before his feet a poor heap of senseless inanimate clay. A helpless in-offensive clod—whilst he himself should



be restored to his place in the opinion of men—by having committed . . . What? An action which every one of those very men would know he had been driven into against his conscience, against his principles, against his opinions, against his prejudices,—his often expressed opinions, his well-known principles.

For had he not declared them openly hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds of times? Had he not declaimed, in terms of the most bitter contempt—the most biting sarcasm—against the wickedness, and the folly, and the weakness—nay, and the cowardice—of this mode of arbitrement between man and man? Had he not declared his conviction of the wickedness of thus flying in the face of one of the very first laws imposed upon human beings,—that of respecting life? Upon the folly of thus putting wrong and right, justice and injustice, injured and injurer, against each other upon equal terms, and calling *that* satisfaction! Had he not harangued upon the weakness of submitting to

the conventional absurdities of society, and suffering life and conscience to lie at the mercy of its preposterous arrangements? Above all, had he not exclaimed till he was hoarse against the cowardice—the infamous cowardice—of such a proceeding? He had pointed out,—and rightly enough, but for the air of triumphant superiority which he was accustomed to assume,—that no stronger proof could be given of a deficiency in all that constituted true manly strength and courage than was given by him thus become the slave of opinion. Who dare not do what he thought just—dare not do what he thought right—dare not resist crime, and absurdity, and folly, because he feared the eye of man.

Cowardice it was,—ay, rank, contemptible cowardice;—what else?

Over, and over, and over again, had he thus argued and talked. Talked till the dark blood crimsoned his sallow cheeks to the temples,—till his black stern eye flashed with ominous fire. Ay, that strong bitter tongue of his

had exhausted all its stores of sarcastic scorn to stigmatise the base cowardice of him who suffered himself to be driven by the world's laugh to the breaking through of his own well-known and acknowledged principles. The barrier thus presented, and which he had himself elevated between him and this—satisfaction,—a satisfaction which he now felt he would have given life here and life hereafter,—everything on earth and everything beyond the earth to obtain—he felt to be invincible.

There was no such satisfaction possible for *him*. His principles were too well known.

Often and oftent, in his declamatory arguments, he had been met—not with arguments strong and logical as his own—for that was impossible—but in the usual manner in which the *oi polloi* of this world, who cannot argue, and will not be convinced, meet reasoning too strong for reply—by the common resource of such, to use the then University phrase—the *tu quoque*. “Wait and see,—wait



and see,—wait till he's tried ; we shall see what all these fine phrases will come to. Let him be put to proof. Let him be put to proof, and see whether he has more of this fine moral courage he pretends to than other men." And, above all, echoed in his memory's ear, the loud contemptuous laugh upon such occasions of Marcus Fitzroy, who ridiculed his notions and defied his logic. And one sentence in particular there was, not to be forgotten, which had been uttered by this young Irishman, who detested reasoning, and looked upon duelling as one of the first necessities and most heroic contingencies of life—and between whom and himself so violent an antipathy had arisen.

"I'd like to *thrash* those notions out of him," the lively young Hibernian had been heard to say, with that exulting air of conscious superiority which action assumes over reason ; "I'd like to *thrash* him out of his notions. And see if I don't, if ever he gives me the opportunity!—and then we shall see what will become of his logic."

The very man — the very aggressor, would be the first to triumph.

Marcus Fitzroy cared not one rush for a duel; with him it came as “easy as eating”—A common necessary incident in every young man’s life,—to be regarded as lightly as the gay young fellow at that time regarded most things. Ever ready he was to stake his life upon the turn of a hair, either to defend his own honour or to serve a friend. Generous, free-hearted as the day was he—thoughtless of consequences, free and wild as the wind. The chartered libertine whom every one laughed at, admired, and loved.

These thoughts, as they rose in Randal Langford’s spirit, were truly bitter as wormwood. This last triumph of his adversary did, indeed, eat into his soul; and he had not even the satisfaction of feeling that the tremendous sacrifice he was called upon to make was offered up at the shrine of his conscience. The devil within could not cheat him so far. He was denied this proud reward,—that

noble, elevating, inner sense of the right, the courageous, and the manly, which would have carried a character like his, triumphant, through the deepest obloquy.

He knew himself so far. He knew that it was not respect for the law of God,—that it was not obedience to principle,—that it was not the manly strength that adheres to duty in defiance of the clamours of all mankind, that prompted him to the course he was about to take. No, no ! Alas ! after all, it was but cowardice in another form. Fear of man's opinion lay at the root of it—Fear as contemptible as that he had been wont so loudly to stigmatise. Fear, of what the young men about him—boys he so heartily despised—fear of what they would say, would think of him, if driven to abandon his opinions. Fear, above all—abject fear—of the moment when he should confront that young exulting creature—the laughing devil in his eye—upon a field to which he had suffered himself to be driven in defiance of every well-known principle and determination.

The alternative was horrible. On either side lay shame before men. That burning, agonizing, racking thing, to a proud, haughty spirit like his—shame before men!

He despised every several man among them, but before the power of their opinion his spirit quailed, and his cheek, at the mere idea of their contempt, fired or blanched.

Partly from vast natural strength both of body and mind,—partly from that blind self-esteem which is engendered by the ignorance of ourselves and others, resulting from a retired education,—partly from a natural haughtiness or arbitrariness of disposition, which sought to domineer and take the leading place at all times, Randal Langford was accustomed to hold himself in his own esteem like one who walked in a higher sphere than other men. As a thing apart,—one as much elevated above his ordinary companions in soul, as he towered above them head and shoulders in bodily height.

And now he was smarting, agonizing,

maddening, under the sense of obloquy;—obloquy among these pigmies—obloquy from these pigmies—smarting from the wounding of ten thousand minute arrows, every sheaf of which singly he would have trampled on and defied.

And there was no redress,—nothing to be done,—nothing but to take refuge in the last asylum of the proud;—a dogged determination not to be driven from his resolutions,—not to yield a line to their prejudices or opinions, but to defy them all in this last act,—*Not to fight*.

Oh that this moral triumph had but proceeded from a nobler source! Oh that this strong man, when he resisted error, prejudice, and folly, had but done it from high and generous sentiment!—sentiment which would have magnetized mankind, and won the sympathy and admiration of the young, unthinking, erring crowd around him! As it was, no one sympathised. In fact, every one did just the contrary. Bets were laid,—“Will he fight?—will he not fight?” “Will his pride drive him to seek satisfaction in the



ordinary way, or will his obstinacy maintain him in the absurdity of passively submitting to be horsewhipped, and thus being disgraced for ever ?”

Nobody among the whole body of undergraduates seemed once to think of considering his conduct in any other light. There is a sort of instinct which seems to teach man the motive power which influences his fellow-man. Not one among them ever thought of imagining Langford as the hero or the dupe of a moral principle. Every one believed the contest would lie between revenge and obstinacy—between pride of one sort or the other. Nobody ever dreamed of accusing him of cowardice. They were just enough in their judgments of the man, though so erroneous in their judgments of the act.

The act they designated as an *insigne* absurdity of course ; the motives in which it originated they laughed at. Yet after all there was something in this dogged obstinacy which they could not help feeling a certain respect for. Even dogged

obstinacy is a form of strength, and all men respect moral strength.

Langford had not one single friend to feel for him, understand him, or advise him. Never stood man more alone. Never was man more universally disliked. His great mental superiority,—his rude unpolished manners, rendered more peculiarly offensive by the universal impression that his roughness proceeded less from the ignorance of forms belonging to a secluded education, than from that utter contempt for his fellows, which rendered to please or displease equally indifferent,—his domineering, arbitrary habits,—his implacable, proud, unamiable temper, and the disdain towards his companions which he displayed upon every occasion when these youngsters irritated him by their thoughtlessness and levity—had provoked it.

In short, these qualities united had rendered Langford an object of universal dislike, not to say hatred. The young Irishman, Marcus Fitzroy, a gay, high-spirited, ardent-tempered fellow, had taken a most prominent share in this animosity,

and in the amusement of baiting the northern bear—as they called him—Langford being a North of England man. With the light-artillery of his ready wit he was for ever persecuting him; and the flashes of his quick retorts set many a supper-table upon a roar. Langford had the bitter, irritating feeling upon every occasion of knowing that public opinion was against him.

Argue as he might—thunder as he might—abuse as he might—conclude as he might—were he ten thousand times in the right, one sally from his lively light-armed adversary would lay all his heavy defences prostrate, and convulse the table with laughter. With that peculiar laughter in which the note of triumph is to be detected; that note which proclaims to the writhing heart that every creature present enjoys the defeat.

The hatred Langford conceived for Fitzroy became almost terrible. He lay in wait for every opportunity to attack and to injure him. To his face, behind his back, it was all one. His creed, for Fitz-



roy was a Catholic—his country, for Fitzroy was an Irishman—his family, for his family, though noble, had fallen into poverty and obscurity—himself—for, clever as he was, he said and did many a wild, blundering, imprudent thing,—all these afforded mark wide enough and broad enough for the shafts of malice.

Such proceedings had been some time endured as only just reprisals and legitimate warfare ; but the arrogance and insolence of Langford at last carried him beyond what was considered legitimate or just, and this behind his adversary's back, too. The consequence had been that Fitzroy had vowed to horsewhip him, and had carried the sentence into execution in the manner we have seen.

---

What was talked about at supper-tables that evening but the cause of Fitzroy *versus* Langford ? What discussed but the will and the will not?—the

should or the should not? Loud were the disquisitions. Much bad logic and much worse wit, was expended upon the subject; and a great deal of infamous moral philosophy, of course. There were all sorts of opinions as to what *would* be done, and some difference as to what ought. Not a man but in his own case would have adopted the vulgar conventional mode of demanding satisfaction in the ordinary way; but most of them felt and acknowledged the difficulty as regarded Langford. His profession of principle upon this subject had been so public, so repeated, so *tranchant*, so unmodified; that it seemed impossible for him to recede with honour. The perception of the *fix* he was in was hailed with unmeasured delight. They had him in a trap—the grim monster of whom all these wild lads had felt more or less a little in awe—and oh! how they exulted and revelled in the idea, “What will he do?—what step take next?” Oh! how they rejoiced as they laughed, and pictured him, that grim Bruin, biting his paws for very

rage, not knowing whether to turn to the right hand or to the left.

Fitzroy, the Alexander of the day—the hero of every tongue—the victor who had humbled the fierce indomitable violence of the common enemy—sat there crowned with his laurels—gay, thoughtless, unostentatious, as ever—utterly indifferent as to the next morning's event; believing in his heart that Langford would fight—must fight. To his Irish brain, it appeared a moral impossibility that he could do anything else but fight. Say what they all would, he felt they were talking nonsense—utter nonsense. They might argue it as they chose, but what was, was—what must be, must be—what is in accordance with the inevitable laws of nature, must happen. Langford would challenge him, of course—he should find a challenge on his table when he went home. He should have to fight him next morning; he should have the satisfaction of winging him. It should be the right arm—he would not go near the heart—he had paid him—he was

satisfied—he didn't want to harm the poor old fellow—he had given him his lesson.

So thought the young Irishman about the encounter he expected the next day. And he laughed, and he joked, and he took his wine, and he was, as usual, the delight of the table; and he thought no more of the seriousness of these things—of life and death, wrong or right—than a bird who launches himself on the wing from a tree top, to bathe in the sunlight, carolling with youthful joy. So they laughed, and so they speculated.

But the most interesting speculation in which they indulged was as to how Langford would meet them all to-morrow, supposing that he did *not* fight—what face he would put upon the matter. Much humour was lavished upon this part of the subject; and a great deal of long-brooded ill-will and dislike found vent in satirical description.

However, minutes succeeded to minutes, and hours to hours, and it was time to separate. Bets were settled and booked;

a few more squibs, and a few more loud hearty laughs exchanged, and then supper parties broke up, and undergraduates sought their rooms, all on tip-toe for the morrow—at least as much on tip-toe as men a little the worse for wine, and a good deal the worse for want of sleep, can be said to be. Fitzroy returned to his room with some impatience, and entering hastily went up to his table, fully expecting to find the challenge, he felt so certain of receiving, lying there. I need not inform you that nothing of the sort was to be found. The young man stared. It was the most wonderful phenomenon in human life that *he* had ever met with—monstrous, and utterly unaccountable upon any theory. There was but one reason for declining a duel that he could comprehend—namely, that the man was a coward. Langford he knew was no coward. It was passing strange.

He stood considering a little—as one considers some marvellous event, utterly incapable of being referred to any known

cause or principle. Then he whistled significantly, for a few moments,—dropped the words “Just as he likes,” and taking up his candle went to bed.

The head was soon upon the pillow, and it had not been two seconds upon the pillow before Fitzroy was fast asleep, “in dreams Elysian.”

---

The morning was dark and lowering. A cold raw fog hung over the towers of the University. The sluggish Cam seemed to creep more sluggishly along, as the mist, which had risen from its waters, hung heavy over the trees and towers of the colleges, and college walks and gardens. The sun was not to rise for two hours, but there was a kind of dawning twilight in the east, whilst the moon hidden by the mist, but still hanging on the western range, threw a pale spectral light upon objects. The lamps are faintly twinkling down Trumpington-street, now silent and deserted except by a drowsy watchman or



two, or a few of those accountable figures which at any hour, however late in the night, or before the dawning day, may be seen now and then stealing solitarily along the causeways of great towns—making the night hideous.

Four o'clock this chill morning.—All the clocks and chimes of the University take up the tale and tell it, some in wild notes of music—some by the clear calls of the clock, distinct as the voice of chanticleer—some by the low-toned accents of the bell.

The air is eloquent—talking of—Time—Time—passing—passing Time—Time that was, and is—and is passed, and will not be again.

The slumbering world around lie insensible to the voice. To-night through the insensibility of sleep, as to-morrow through that of indifference.

As little heeds he, the man who in a heavy great coat, and carrying a rough horse-cloth upon his arm, strides down Trumpington-street towards the —— Inn.

The lamps blaze brightly over the arched way to the inn-yard, and the gloominess and silence of this early hour is here enlivened by the floating lights of lanterns and candles, and the voices of busy men, and shrilly exclaiming women. Far under the archway stands the coach—The Northern Highflyer, with four horses in bright harness, stamping and impatient to start—with its staring lamps, and its handsomely painted sides—its burly coachman in heavy great coat, its stern and active guard, its passengers and packages, all in the hurry and excitement of immediate departure.

“Any place inside?”

“Any place inside?” passes from the coachman, too busy arranging the packing of his machine even to look up; “Any place inside?” is carried from mouth to mouth.

“No, sir! No, sir! No, sir!”

“A place on the box?”

“That’s taken.”

“A place anywhere?”

“Yes, sir; the place by me,” says the



guard, in too great a hurry to utter more.

“Fling up my horseman’s cloak, then. When do you start?”

“Two minutes, two seconds. There—away with that basket there.”

A few more seconds. They seem to him like hours: the spirit within is fretting, is raging, to be off—to be away. He lends his giant strength in hoisting up boxes, packages. He is glad to be employed,—anything to divert the irritable gnawing sense of impatience.

At last it is done.

“That’s all?”

“Yes; yes, sir.”

“Will you mount?” says the guard; and Langford is in his place. The guard scrambles up by his side; he puts his horn to his mouth, and the merry cheering blast startles the dull echoes of the night. Lash goes the whip; forward spring the gay prancing horses; they rattle down Trumpington-street, the guard blowing a merry *reveilleé* as the coach careers along. They have crossed the bridge, they are out

of the town. The detested University, with its green-arched arbouring walks, its lofty trees, its hoary towers, its venerable time-hallowed colleges, dies away into the mist—and he is in the freedom of the fields once more.

He breathes again. He begins to draw long, heavy relieving breaths. The fresh air of the morning expands his chest; the free air of nature blows upon his temples. The pressure, the iron band, and the hideous nightmare of the last twelve hours—where are they gone?

They have vanished with the hoar towers of the University—sunk, dissolved, as it were, in the wreath of the mist, which, as the coach thus gallops forward with the speed of the light from the banks of the reedy and sluggish Cam, disappears among the open unenclosed hills towards Newmarket.

The sky clears overhead; the day dawns in the east, and the golden beam first faintly streaking the rising morning, slowly expands, and the birds begin to whistle over the treeless fields as the sun comes

on — comes on—And then there is a pause—till up he bursts in all his glory. The coach gallops on—gallops on—over hill, over dale, across open plain, and between rising banks; and every mile it proceeds, and every half-hour that elapses, fresh freedom and energy seem to visit the bosom of the anguished man. That weight, that oppressive, insupportable weight, which society had laid upon him seems removed. Society and he were not made for each other. He was formed to live alone with nature, like some lordly, sullen, lion that one has heard of—found, in his solitary lonely grandeur in the desert. Such a desert is Randal Langford's element.

His horseman's cloak wrapt round him, for the air of these hills is chilly, his arms crossed over his breast—now he looks down, indulging the delicious feeling of the renewal of life which springs within him, then lifts up his head and cheerfully regards the flying landscape.

Sometimes he, though not given to

casual conversation, addresses the guard, and puts questions about the various seats of the different country gentry as they pass. And with a sullen, indistinct sense of satisfaction hears, alas ! the usual record of this man's extravagance, and that man's unhappiness,—of the vices of such an one, and the misfortune of another,—and why that house is shut up, and this to be sold,—and that is let, and to whom,—that is uninhabited, and why.—A tale, like most tales of humanity, sad and disheartening, because the human story is too often sad and disheartening ; its happier and better side being seldom the upper side of the medal. Misfortunes and crimes stimulate the vulgar curiosity, the vulgar appetite for excitement ; the virtues and their peaceful enjoyments afford little subject for discourse, and little scope for description.

So the traveller goes on. He travels night and day without stopping. And it will take him another night and two days before he reaches the place of his destination. This is Ravenscliffe—situated in a

most secluded part of that part of the country, which lies upon the borders of Northumberland and Durham.

---

“ Good morning ! Horribly cold. This is the most detestable weather.”

“ Say, detestable place in the world. I verily believe we have more fog at Cambridge than at any place in the United Kingdom.”

“ Any news ? How go the bets ? ”

“ Has anybody seen Fitzroy this morning ? He thinks no more of ‘ going out,’ as he calls it, than of playing a game at chuck-farthing—but there is something in the thought of a friend being about to be engaged in a duel, that makes one quiver in spite of one’s self.”

“ Well ; but does any one know anything about it ? Who said he was gone out ? I don’t believe a word of it. I passed his door two minutes ago, and he still sported his oak. I don’t believe he is up. See, his blinds are down ; and the

first thing he does in the morning is, to draw them up."

"Well, get along, or we shall be too late for chapel."

"By Jove! I wonder how Langford *will* look."

"You need not trouble yourself with wondering how he will look," said another under-graduate, joining the party—"for Langford's gone."

"Gone!"

"Yes; my Gyp has just told me that his Gyp told him Langford left his rooms at four o'clock this morning, and was off by the Northern Highflyer."

"Fairly turned tail."

At which they all laughed, and hurried in to chapel.



## CHAPTER II.

'Tis the place ; and round the gables, as of old, the curlews call,  
Dreary gleams about the moorland, flying over Locksley Hall—  
Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the dreary tracks. . .

TENNYSON.

RAVENSCLIFFE is situated in what was then a most deeply secluded part of England—I say was, for I understand one of the northern railroads has now penetrated through that portion of the country, disclosing to the eye its long-hidden and unimaginable beauties—but at the time of which I am writing, it might be called a district almost quite unknown. No great roads traversed it—no traffic animated it—the secluded vales and *deans* never echoed to the rousing horn of the mail-

coach, nor were enlivened by the gay public equipage glancing along its deserted roads.

A wide desert of brown hills and rocky mountains, a desolate country of mines and miners, extending over wide tracts, separated from the ordinary world some of the most lovely scenery of our beautiful island. A few ancient mansions, surrounded by their secular woods of oak, and birch, and mountain ash ; with wild half-redeemed parks, studded by enormous trees, that might have seen the Conquest,—were scantily scattered over this district, most of them, even at that time of day, being abandoned by their proprietors. A few there were, however, where the owners still lived in a kind of feudal grandeur, almost entirely separated from the common current of the world.—The habit of annual visits to London not being at this time of day at all general. These residents were mostly given to those faults, and endowed with the good qualities such seclusion from the world usually engenders. The evils of the system, I think, it is now

generally acknowledged, in most cases, outweighing its advantages.

One of the most imposing—one of the most picturesque—one of the most secluded—and one of the most gloomy of these mansions—was Ravenscliffe.

The Ravenscliffe property was very extensive, stretching over a wide area of the surrounding country—The estate was certainly less valuable than it was large; nevertheless, in the wide-spreading circumference of its boundary-line, there were included many rich valleys, where the herbage was of that rich and peculiar quality which belongs to the well-known dales of the North, and from whence noble droves of oxen were even then sent to the London market.

Mr. Langford's income, therefore, was a handsome one, though not of the enormous amount which those proprietors realise whose barren mountains cover mines of coal or lead. In the district belonging to Mr. Langford there were none; in consequence, the scenery upon his estate possessed more than the usual

share of beauty. The steeps were precipitous, and covered with abundance of that wild vegetation which, intermingled with the projecting faces of sand or granite rock, produces so much beauty. Trees of vast size adorned the woods, which came sweeping down between the hills; and among them ran one of those bright, broad, pebbly, transparent mountain rivers, with bold faces of rock rising abruptly on the sides, or here and there broken and tumbling in confusion into the stream—which render such scenery so eminently beautiful.

Above the stream, where the rocky precipices at intervals were interrupted or had receded, pendant birches of extraordinary size and beauty waved, whilst hollies, that were like forest-trees, stood among the lighter greens, and gave effect to the picture. Giant oaks stretched their broad arms across the sky; and the water—the living water, which played and meandered, sparkled and rushed onward, now dashing in wild passion over the broken rocks, now softly meandering

round some small promontory clothed with weeping birch-trees, now sleeping in some still, dark pool, under the shadow of enormous oaks, or sparkling gaily in the sunbeams as it ran over the glancing pebbles. The river was celebrated as a trout-stream, and possessed every charm which lures the pensive and imaginative fisherman to his still pleasures.

Upon a scaur, high over this beautiful stream—a sort of hilly projection, upon either side of which fell two valleys, clothed with magnificent woods—stood the house, or what had once, indeed, been the Castle of Ravenscliffe. The castle was almost entirely cleared away, but some vestiges of it yet remained. There was a large square tower, still inhabited; and a good deal of the old materials, and even some of the old elevation, might be traced among the servants' apartments and the stables. The modern house, which might, indeed, itself be about a hundred and fifty years old, extended in one long line from the square tower, to which it was united, along the front of the precipice.



There was nothing particular to recommend it. It had been built, with much contempt of the rules of architecture, chiefly of materials, it would seem, drawn from the ancient edifice. A long line of crenellated wall terminated in two small crenellated towers, the wall being pierced with large windows, which were those of the drawing, dining-room, and library,—large-paned ordinary sash-windows. There was no attempt at imitation of Elizabethan or Mediæval art; the house having been erected at that unimaginative period of English history, the close of the seventeenth, or opening of the eighteenth, century. In short, nothing could be more wildly romantic than the scenery around; nothing more prosaically common-place than the house and its furniture. There were no remains of the splendour of the Louis Quatorze, or the luxury of the Louis Quinze, style here; no elaborate arch to door or window; no lofty ceilings; no painted walls; no charming oriel windows; no pleasant, secluded, fantastical nooks and corners. The rooms were square, or ob-



long—square, or oblong as packing-cases ; neither high, nor low, nor long, nor short, but just in that desolating proportion which has no character at all. The doors were square at top, and of the same despairing propriety of proportion : windows alike—sash-windows, all. Window-panes neither large nor small ; just small enough to cut up the view piecemeal, just too large to give the least comfortable feeling of twilight seclusion to the apartment. Not a creeper was allowed to be trained against the walls of this unamiable abode. Creepers occasioned all sorts of dirt and insects, and hurt the stonework ; and what was the use of them ? What possible use could there be in having a set of trees, even fruit-trees, damping the walls, and serving as a harbour for every species of vermin ?

In front of this long line of house, between it and the precipice, ran a space of turf, kept scrupulously mowed and clean ; and in the centre of it ran a somewhat narrow gravel walk. Not a rose-bush, not a shrub, not a flower—but once there, you felt no longer the want of these things. There

was the glorious view before you—the steep precipice, the sparkling river coursing at your feet, making a thousand fantastic leaps and tiny waterfalls; the magnificent birch-trees bathing their light branches in the liquid stream; the vast secluded woods stretched on each side and behind you, and the wild scenery of hill upon hill, peak beyond peak, mountain beyond mountain, spread in sublime desolation in front.

One other feature, however, peculiar to the place, must not be forgotten,—namely, the old hoar gray tower itself; its attendant single oak-tree, and the raven's nest, which, according to tradition, had been there for centuries.

The dark tower rose in a sort of gloomy grandeur against the sky, solitary and deserted of its fellows, and seeming to look down with a species of forlorn contempt upon the more modern mansion. It was still, however, inhabited; of which the ordinary sash-windows, most ingeniously inserted into its moss-grown, weather-beaten walls gave proof. The grass-plot and gravel-walk was carried on towards this old

frowning tower in all their trim and prosaic propriety; but when you had followed them so far, and turned the farther angle of that part of the building, you came suddenly upon a feature more in character with it,—namely, the raven's oak.

The raven's oak was a vast ruinous old tree, cotemporary with, or in all probability far more ancient than the Norman edifice. The trunk,—now in an advanced stage of decay, having upon one side a space which would contain two or three people,—was of an enormous circumference; hoary, rugged, moss-grown. It was surmounted by a vast coronet of branches of amazing strength and thickness, which spread their huge arms over a wide extent of rough and shaggy grass. It stood there in its solitary grandeur like a noble vegetable cathedral—its huge arms swaying majestically to the rising and falling wind, giving forth, at intervals, the solemn mysterious voices of the spirits of the air, which seemed to breathe amidst its multitudinous wilderness of leaves.

Sublime relict of ages gone by!

In the very centre of this huge tree was situated the raven's nest. A pair of ravens, —and one pair only,—had built there time out of mind. The nest had seemed to increase in size with every fresh generation of these singular birds, and now presented the appearance of a small hillock of dead branches in the very centre of the verdant, living green which surrounded it. The hoarse croak of the ravens as they slowly winged their way round and round the tree; their black forms, rendered prominent against the golden green of the leaves, completed the beautiful and singular picture. These ravens, as I told you, were always there,—and always a pair, and a pair only. The habits of birds in these respects are little understood. It would seem as if something of our right of succession were preserved among them. So long as the parents live, the children appear to forsake the nest in which they were reared, and leave to their progenitors the undisputed possession: when the old ones die, a successor, without hesitation or dispute, arrives and takes their place. This

it is certain had been the case at Ravenscliffe;—for as long as the castle had been a castle, or the oak a grown tree, all tradition agreed that the two ravens had been there; and this tradition was confirmed in some measure by the raven borne as crest, and two ravens proper upon the shield of the Langfords.

I know few things more grand and imposing than it was upon one of those low windy days, when large masses of cloud are slowly sailing over the heavens, and the wind makes a solemn music in the tops of the woods, than to stand under the venerable tower which frowned above your head, and watch the branches of this mountain of verdure, slowly heaving—rising and falling like the regular breathing of some huge living thing,—the two ravens slowly whirling round and round, their black forms giving point and feature to the picture, and their hoarse croak every now and then breaking the solemn monotony of the wind voices.

Every boy that had ever borne the name of Langford, had, in his turn, been in the



habit of scaling the huge trunk of the oak-tree, and peeping into the nest of the sacred ravens; but, boy nor man, for miles round, would have dared to put a sacrilegious hand within its precincts, and touch an egg—far less have taken one. They would not have done it scarcely for their lives. Still less would any one have presumed to disturb the parent birds. No ancient dame, no hoary Druid, could have venerated these singular creatures more than did the whole peasant neighbourhood round.

Ravenscliffe, Langford, and the ravens, seemed indissolubly associated in every imagination. Nay, the character of the ravens, and of the raven's oak, seemed in some mysterious way attached to the family. The Langfords were all of lofty stature, dark, with raven hair and eyes, and a certain rugged, haughty sternness of countenance which rendered them alike respected and feared.

---



Such was Ravenscliffe—and such as it was, one great quality it appeared to possess in an eminent degree, and that was, the power of attaching its proprietors to the spot. This was a sort of traditionary feeling in the family of Langford. Every member of it loved, honoured, revered Ravenscliffe. To belong to Ravenscliffe was in itself a distinction. To be the heir of Ravenscliffe was, in a sort, like being heir-apparent to a kingdom; it was a dignity inappreciable. No daughter left the house of Langford to enter other families, but taught her children to honour Ravenscliffe—to believe no house, no estate, no possession, could equal that of Ravenscliffe. No younger son left the father's mansion to try his fortune in the world but carried with him the undying veneration for Ravenscliffe. To send the spoils of their various enterprizes to adorn Ravenscliffe—to revisit Ravenscliffe—this was the prime object of life. The attachment was so strong, the association, as we may call it, so absurd, that very few younger sons among the Langfords were

known to marry. They mostly returned to die at Ravenscliffe, or to live there *renting* some of the farms, or inhabiting some one or other of the small houses upon the estate,—content, so they laid their bones in the family vault at Ravenscliffe.

---

The family did not mingle much with the world in general, nor had it done so for many generations.

At the time of the great rebellion, Langford, of Ravenscliffe, had taken part with the Parliament. He was a doughty captain in Cromwell's army—a stern, sour Independent. At the Restoration, he had managed to escape the punishment of exile or confiscation; perhaps he might, from the remote quarter in which his property was situated, have escaped observation. However that might be, with little gratitude for the leniency he had experienced, he had returned to Ravenscliffe scowling and grumbling like a retreating lion—cursing the government of

kings and prelates—abhorring alike every established form, whether in Church or State. In this humour he had shut himself up in his gloomy fortress. There, in due time, he had married a young lady—if she could ever have been called young—of the same stern, uncompromising faith as himself. One son and some daughters had blessed, or rather had been the result of, their union. The children were cherished in the stern principles of their parents—to love Ravenscliffe, and hate the establishment in Church and State, being the two foundation-stones of their teaching.

As time passed on—as the Stewarts were driven from the throne, and the glorious house of Hanover and Protestant succession succeeded—the feelings of the party to which the house of Langford belonged, gradually softened and subsided for want of the aliment of opposition.

The Independents lost much of their sullen feelings of separation, and mingled more with their fellow-men. The gloomy features peculiar to the party melted, in some degree, into the general harmony of

thought which began to pervade society ; and the Langfords, no longer shutting themselves up at Ravenscliffe with a few family connections and Independent divines, began to come out a little into the world. Langfords were sent to Cambridge, though they refused subscription, and never were made B.A.'s. The father of Randal Langford had been there, at least, and to St. John's had sent his son. But schools, especially public schools, were still held in abomination, by the house of Ravenscliffe.

The sons were educated in all the pride and exclusiveness which pertains to a system of private education, when carried on out of contempt, or rather hatred, of the vices and deficiencies of public educators ; and all the narrowness of spirit and ignorance of society and of self was engendered, which is too often the result of being reared under a private tutor, whose bread and advancement depend upon the subservience of his humour.

The Langfords, to a man, were the last people in the world to escape uninjured

from such discipline, or rather want of discipline. There was something so rigid, so arbitrary, so overbearing, in their tempers, such a thorough, inbred, double-dyed conviction of the value of the race of Langfords,—of their indisputable superiority, both in conduct and principles,—and of the utter frivolity and absurdity of the world in general, that nothing but a thorough grinding down of the whole man, a good course of thrashing in a public school, could have brought them into the shape of anything that was tolerable. For want of this they were, father and son, generation after generation, most *intolerable*, and were in general pronounced so by every one of their acquaintance. *Sotto voce*, however, as you hear men whisper a derogatory opinion against that which is held in general reverence; for the strict rectitude of their conduct, their high and haughty bearing, their known observance of all the laws of morality, and their deep religious convictions and austere practice of its obligations,—Dissenters though they



were,—commanded the respect of everybody.

Now, of all the members of this harsh, overbearing, and unamiable race, no one had appeared for generations more austere in his temper, more overbearing in his habits, more unamiable in his manners, than this very Randal Langford, who got horsewhipped for his insolent contempt of good feeling and good manners by the fiery Irishman. And of all that race,—so deep, so profoundly sensitive in their feelings as they unquestionably were,—iron as their exterior might appear,—no one was capable of more acute, more profound, more ineffaceable feeling, than this very man. Impressions once made remained indelible; hidden they might be,—closed over, as it were, and concealed under the stern impassable exterior,—but they were as characters written upon the rock, and were never, never to be effaced.

---



The fresh morning air, as he was carried rapidly over the breezy, open Cambridge-shire hills, far from the detested precincts of the University, had raised, however, an unwonted sense of exhilaration in the traveller. The fresh morning air is like the wine of life, crisping the nerves, cheering the spirits. It is irresistible. No ill-humour, no depression, no vexation, can withstand it.

Randal felt, too, something like Alexander when he had cut the Gordian Knot, as if, by his resolution, he had solved a difficulty until then insolvable. He had manifested his contempt for the conventional laws of honour,—his contempt for the opinion of his fellows,—his contempt for the University itself,—by thus defying her regulations and insulting her authority. It was a triumph; and he enjoyed it thoroughly, as the coach careered gaily along, and the inspiriting horn seemed to blow in harmony with the voice of victory within.

Rustication?—Expulsion?—What would the penalty be? He cared not. He

should be at Ravenscliffe. He was heir of Ravenscliffe, — the future Lord of Ravenscliffe! What mattered it to him what a few sheepish old heads of colleges, — far less what a heap of empty, feather-headed under-graduates, — might say?

But this intoxication lasted not long. The day darkened; the sun was covered with low, heavy clouds, — not dark thunder-clouds, great and imposing, and elevating to look upon, — but low, dusky, uncharacterised clouds, telling of mizzling rain, which soon began to fall in that regular, voiceless, baptizing, determined manner, which is more than sufficient to deaden any spirits and any courage. A mournful whistling wind every now and then broke the silence; the roads became heavy and muddy; the horses pranced and spanked no more. Nobody talked or laughed on the top of the coach. There was nothing to listen to with inward contempt; no proud comparisons to feed insolent self-esteem. Everybody seemed infected with the moodiness of the hour. He forgot that he had defied the Univer-

sity, and remembered that he had been horsewhipped. He forgot that he had scorned to challenge Marcus Fitzroy, and had held him so far at defiance. His shoulders tingled. Again a voice was ringing in his ears :

“And that,—and that,—and that,—and that !”

It echoed like the voice of a mocking demon to his memory. The mood into which he now sank was fearful. In his moments of triumphant defiance of Marcus, the under-graduates, and the University, he could have been almost forgiving. Had the neck of Fitzroy laid under his feet, he might have been generous ; he might not have crushed it ; he might have turned away. But when his feelings took their present turn, —when to the nervous excitement of the first few hours had succeeded that reaction which was sure to come,—when he recollected, with a sense of shame and rage indescribable, that all which had passed was no dream, but that he had been horsewhipped,—that Fitzroy *had* horse-

whipped him, and that he had taken no revenge! . . . nay, that he had abandoned the field to his rival,—fairly run away,—deserted,—making his escape with his tail between his legs, like a lashed hound (for so the change in his spirit represented things now)—when he felt his cheek, now burning with the deep sense of insult received, then whitening with unimaginable passion,—for he felt himself sick with passion . . . and reflected where he was, and where Fitzroy was, and contrasted the exulting laugh of the gay young fellows echoed by that of his admiring friends, with his own sullen, solitude of feeling,—the victorious triumph of the one with his own degrading punishment,—oh! then my pen wants means to describe what took place within his heart!

Suffice it to say, that the agony subsided in this one resolution, the only one in which he could find consolation,—a resolution to take refuge from this outrage against all that was dear to man, in one determination, at least; namely, that

of maintaining henceforth and for ever a spirit of implacable unforgiveness—Never to forget and never to pardon.

The time would come,—yes, life would present some opportunity or other, for exacting payment. The deep, bitter yearnings of his heart were mistaken for presentiments. In them he took refuge. He was in some degree restored to a sense of his own dignity by the iron determination with which this resolution was engraved upon his heart. He felt almost as if already half avenged by having made it,—almost restored to his own esteem by the dark energy of his undying sense of injury,—the unbending perseverance with which he knew he could, and he would, maintain it. He understood himself but too well.

He nourished this dark temper in his heart, till it became a habit which was entwined with every lineament of his character—a part of himself, not to be eradicated but with life.

Restored to a sort of gloomy tranquillity by these last feelings and reflections,

his countenance, though very dark, is no longer agonized.

He slept a good part of the following night in his place beside the guard,—for even his strong frame began to yield to the effects of the fierce emotions he had gone through. About twelve o'clock upon the second day, he was put down at a little hill-side inn, about seven miles from Ravenscliffe, being the nearest point at which the “Northern Highflyer” passed the domain.



## CHAPTER III.

Darkly, darkly hath the curse of evil swept across the earth,  
Blasting every form of beauty, blighting every scene of mirth;  
Changing what was once a universal paradise  
Into a den of evil passions. . . .

JOHN WILLIAM FLETCHER.

It was a dark, dreary day—high noon—and the sun as completely hidden as if he had still been below the horizon. Gray, ill-defined clouds of vapour, one layer over the other, stretched to the very verge of a desolate landscape, penetrated by no gleams of light, and casting no shadow. The barren hills extended far on every side, a melancholy waste, without feature or character, except that of monotonous solitude. Not a tree—not a shrub; no

flocks bleating upon the hills—no herds grazing in the valleys, which were filled with bogs and covered with bog-myrtle, or with coarse, reedy herbage, and the cotton grass.

The cottage, built of rough stone, thatched, and low-roofed, with its narrow, slanting door, looking as if the roof was pressing it out of the perpendicular, and two or three small, ill-formed windows on each side, presented a picture of the wildest and most wretched description. There was not a plant higher than a gooseberry-bush about it,—except, indeed, one old, tattered mountain-ash, broken and shattered by many a winter storm, which grew beside one of the gables. A few barren fields, enclosed by walls of rough stone,—a few rude farm-buildings, forming a sort of court on the left, the gray, monotonous colour of which was redeemed, in one instance only, by the red poles of a cart thrown upwards in one corner,—a garden, or rather an apology for a garden, where a few rows of wretched potatoes struggled

for a precarious existence, and a few gooseberry and currant-trees stood shivering for their lives,—complete the description of the little wayside house of entertainment, standing close upon the broad, magnificent turnpike-road which traversed the district through which the “Northern Highflyer” travelled.

Of course, when any of the family from Ravenscliffe were expected to arrive, servants with horses or carriages were sure to be in attendance to meet them,—the place being about six miles from the Great House, and a wild, dreary district lying between them; but there was no one in waiting now. The coach suddenly stopped. Langford was startled from a reverie; he dropped himself down—paid the guard—received his horseman’s cloak upon his extended arm; and away sprang the horses, and the bright vehicle was soon lost amid the hills.

Langford turned towards the house. Mine host and his wife were, however, already beforehand with him. They had sallied forth when the coach had stopped,

one from his farm-yard, the other from her door, and it was—

“Heigh! Mr. Randal. My goodness, Mr. Langford! Who’d have thought of seeing you here? And nobody on earth come to meet you!”—This was from the woman.

“Main glad always to see you, Mr. Randal,”—from the man,—“but I hope nothing amiss. You ben’t expected at the Great House, I’m thinking; for I saw Thomas yestre’en about the turf-cutting for Madam Langford’s dressing-room fire, and not one word said he of meeting you, or your being expected on.”

Langford made not the smallest reply to these two speeches, only his countenance seemed to grow darker and darker. At last, after standing there a short time without uttering a syllable—and oh! the storm that raged within during that brief time!—he broke silence by asking, “How many miles do you call it over the hills to Ravenscliffe? I suppose there is some nearer cut than by the horse-road?”

“May-be four miles as the crow flies,”

answered the man ; “ but it’s a way main hard to find. There is a sort of a path, it’s true ; but never was country so wanting in landmarks as this here, save to those who know it passing well. Every hill looks like the other—all biggish and more big ; and every bog between ’em just the same—full of bog-myrtle and cotton-weed, nothing else. Surely, a barer, barrener tract nor this is not to be found in the wide creation ;—not a sheep’s grass, to say nothing of a cow’s, to be found for miles round. Ay, sir, sure and certain there is a short cut across them hills,—but I misdoubt it. Better take the bridle-road. Yet, stay ; if you are set upon the shorter, Mr. Randal,—and sure the t’other’s a long six mile, and no one to meet you,—why stay, I’ll be happy, I’m sure, to show you the way. Here, Bet, hold a hand ; give me my smock-frock. I’ll be at your service, Mr. Randal, in a minute.”

“ No, no ! ” answered Langford, impatiently ; “ I don’t want anybody’s help. Show me which way the path lies ; I am

not very likely to lose myself among hills I have known all my life."

"Well-a-day! well-a-day!" the good woman kept repeating, to his great provocation, "to think of Mr. Randal being come back this day, of all days in the year, and not a soul here to meet him! Why, sir, I thought you wasn't to come from the great Cambridge Colleges till Christmas."

"Will you hold your tongue or not, woman?" broke out angrily from the young man, "and let me hear what your husband is saying?"

"Why, what I'm saying, Mr. Randal, is, that you may think you know your way over these hills as well as any on us, for how you've been among 'em, man and boy, a matter of twenty years or so; but I doubt whether you know this side of the property so well as t'other; for, bless me! except a little snipe-shooting in one or two places, what should bring man or boy here? You'd better—you'd better a deal, Mr. Randal, let me show you the road."

"Better a deal! better a deal!"—



screamed mine hostess in a shrill key, rendered piercing by her anxiety; for the heir of Ravenscliffe was esteemed as a sort of common property among all the good women round. "Better a deal! better a deal! be ruled,—for love of goodness be ruled, Mr. Randal; you'll be lost—you may be bogged—there are awful bogs and places there away—now do—do—what will your father? what will Madam Langford say?"

"Will you never hold your noise, woman?" cried Langford, roughly. "I tell you I won't have anybody with me—I choose to go that way, and I choose to go alone—here Job, will you point out the way, or will you not? That wife of yours is enough to drive a man mad with her confounded clatter."

He spoke so angrily and vehemently, that both man and woman were at once cowed into silence. The woman retreated within the house-door, awe-struck and frightened. It never, however, once entering into her head to criticise or venture to censure in the slightest degree this im-

perious haughtiness of manner. The good man dropped his honest head a little,—half ashamed of his own kind importunity as of a fault; and silently led the way down the turnpike-road to the place from which the mountain-path diverged.

“This is the way, sir,” he said respectfully; “keep straight forward for about a mile, till you come to where two paths part. Take the left-hand, if you please—the right leads into the very heart of the wilderness, for miles and miles. Will you not please to leave your heavy horseman’s cloak with me? It will be a load to carry over these hills.”

“No.” And without condescending to utter a syllable more, Randal put some money into the man’s hand, and turned towards the wilderness.

---

The path ran dimly discernible between the coarse tufts of grass and sweet gale, and scanty knots of heath and gorse, winding among the dreary hills, now up,

now down. Now affording a view over the wide-extended desolation of the prospect—now losing itself amid the boggy valleys and allowing of no prospect but that of the black bogs, with their pools of dark stagnant water, their tiny forests of bog myrtle, their tufts of coarse reeds, and the white cotton-grass waving its snowy head mournfully up and down in the chill whistling wind.

Now and then a snipe or a curlew would suddenly start up from among the reeds, and silently wing its way over the marsh. Sometimes a windchat or a sand-piper ran whistling and wagging its white tail across the path. But these events were rare. Nothing could exceed the silence and loneliness of the scene—the aspect of dead nature which it presented.

He walked on, indifferent to all. He neither regarded the gloomy lowering sky, nor the dreary wilderness around him; he marked not the black bogs, the stagnant pools, the monstrous tracts of bog myrtle, nor the white waving of the cotton-grass. The scene was too per-

fectly in harmony with his present feelings to awaken attention by contradiction. There was a sullen silence—a sullen absence of every cheerful form or colour, which was in unison with the deep gloom of his mind.

His various feelings had at length subsided into this. It was the last change of that horrible and irritating vicissitude of thoughts and sentiments through which he had passed, and it remained the prominent one.

Deep indeed was the cloud that darkened his mind, and dreary the scene of utter desolation—of utter severance from all human sympathy, which oppressed him as he wandered on. Not that he was one accustomed to need human sympathy—but there was something in this total despair of attaining it which was appalling even to him. What a contrast did his present solitude of being offer to the busy animated scene he had so lately left!

Alone amid a crowd—he had been, it is true. In a certain sense, he had felt perfectly alone amidst that crowd; but it

was as a giant may be said to be alone among pigmies. These pigmies might have been annoying as they crowded and pressed around him — troublesome and tormenting he might have found them; but he had brushed them away roughly, or he had spurned them, or he had crushed them. He had been at enmity with them all, yet he had had a good deal to do with them. He had felt himself disliked, and in a certain sense solitary, amid the general aversion—but respected and feared, nevertheless. In spite of his unpopularity, his pride had been gratified,—he had felt himself a great man among them, whatever else he might be.

Now, what was he become? A Cain—a wanderer driven from the haunts of men. The mark was upon him. The ineffaceable, the indelible brand. A mark is set upon Cain, and whosoever meeteth him shall spurn him.

Oh, the awful desolation of that thought! There was no refuge for him left in that world of yesterday. But in the silent wilderness around him, severed from

his fellow-men—there he might yet be himself—there he might yet be what he had once been—restored to his self-dignity and self-respect.

Said I so,—alas! no—unhappy man! The tingling lash was yet upon his shoulders—the lines lay there as if imprinted with characters of fire—the scars were on his soul—nothing could efface *them*. The poisoned mantle of Dejanira was *disgrace*—was *shame*! It clung to his flesh, it was burned into his flesh. It clung to his mind, it clave to, and poisoned his mind. It envenomed the life-springs within his heart—this pertinacious sense of indelible disgrace—this undying sense of shame.

The more he was left undisturbed to his own reflections, the further he flew from the busy scenes of a few hours ago, the more intense did the idea become. In this gloomy waste that surrounded him now, the more and the more intense—for there was not one object to divert the mind from this all-absorbing sentiment. It was unfortunate, indeed, at that mo-



ment. Sufficient to constitute of it a fixed idea, which henceforward became a permanent feature of his mind.

Unfortunately this solitary walk proved a long one. Absorbed in his own thoughts, Randal passed the indicated turning, and was soon buried in the deep wilds that stretched to a vast extent northwards. He went on, on, on—hill and bog—hill and bog—for a great many hours; at length he stopped, and looked up. Suddenly it struck him that he ought to have been at home by this time. He looked about him, and then became aware that he was where he had never been before,—in a district totally unknown to him,—in short that he had lost himself. He looked round, and he looked up. Not the slightest indication could he discover as to where he might be;—he did not even know in what direction he had wandered, or on which side his father's house might lie.

The sky was so completely obscured that there was no discovering the position of the sun; and even if he could thus have ascertained the points of the com-

pass, it would have been of little use, except so far as that he knew he ought not to go north — that northwards lay a pathless wilderness extending to the borders of Scotland, almost untrodden by the foot of man : and that, in any other direction, so he walked forwards, he must, sooner or later, inevitably arrive at some human habitation.

He looked up, he looked round—a leaden sky, an interminable solitude. Then suddenly the wish arose to fold himself up in his horseman's cloak, and there to lie down and die. There shame could not pursue him ; infamy would expire before she could reach him there. There in bitterness he would lie down and expire ; his body should return to the elements, and the brand upon his shoulders be effaced. Had the death that he desired been a short and sudden death, I think there is little doubt but that in his present mood, in the bitterness of his spirit, he might have taken refuge in it ; but he felt the force of a strong life, the resistance of an iron constitution within him, and

he dreaded the fearful struggle. To die thus would be to die a long, lingering, agonising death of days—nay, it might be, of weeks: he had heard of such things. An idea such as that was insupportable. He abruptly turned, and began to retrace his steps.

A long, long, weary, and toilsome task it was. The few mountain-paths were so intricate and devious, that he soon ceased to attempt to pursue them. But now the sun, descending to the horizon, began to cast a faint gleam from beneath the cloudy canopy above, and Randal was enabled to take the points of the compass. South-west, he believed, was the direction he ought to take; and he resolved to follow it, straightly as the crow flies, whilst the lingering light afforded some assistance.

Once adopted, he began to carry out the design with his usual determination. He scrambled up the rugged hill-sides; he made his way through the bogs; now he fell, now he was upon his hands and knees. This hill seemed unassailable, that bog

impassable; no matter, he got through them all. At length, just as the deepening twilight began to render distant objects almost indiscernible, he caught a view of a peculiarly-shaped hill, which he knew to lie about a mile at the back of Ravenscliffe, and to it he made his way.

Strong man as he was, his strength was beginning by this time to be exhausted. His knees trembled, strange sensations were about his temples and heart; but he posted on. Now he reaches the foot of the well-known hill; now he scales the lofty barrier; now he is upon the other side; and now rises the moon nearly at the full, and bathes in a flood of light the distant woods, the glittering river, the looming spectre tower, and the raven's oak of his father's house.

He sat down to take breath, and gazed upon the lovely, peaceful scene. Yes; there it lay, stretched in all its mountain beauty, serene and lonely, sleeping quietly in the bathing moonbeams. Suddenly, he heard the stable-clock strike. The loud clear bell sounded far in the deep

silence ; one, two, three, four, and to ten. He counted it. They would not be all asleep ; an hour yet before his father would be gone up to bed. Regular as the clock itself were his habits ; and his hour for retiring to his own study, to offer his secret prayer before going to his rest, was eleven. There was yet time, if he pushed on, to reach his home, and meet his father that night.

Meet his father ! How meet his father ? At the thought, the pulses of his heart made a sudden pause ; then the thick throbbing blood hurried forward again. Again the dark lurid red rose to his temples ; again it sunk down, to be succeeded by a sickly paleness—blackness.

But he rose, and pushed forward. He is over the remainder of the moor ; he enters the woods, and passes between the fields ; he ascends the precipitous road at the foot of Ravenscliffe ; he gazes upon the monumental tower ; he passes, without pausing, by the loved and honoured oak. The clock had not yet struck eleven, and he stands at the hall-door. He pulled



the bell; a servant opened the door and uttered an exclamation of astonishment, but ventured not to utter a word. He stood in too much awe of his young master to be surprised into familiarity.

Langford seizes the candle which the man held in his hand, strides across the hall, opens the dining-room door, and presents himself before his astonished parent with the words, "Father! I bring you home a disgraced man."

---

The room was low and gloomy; the fire was smouldering upon the hearth; two mould candles upon the table threw a dim circle of light around it. The corners of the room,—indeed, all the rest,—were in darkness.

The old man was sitting by the table. As the door opened, he made a slight gesture of surprise: then he slowly arose; but, without extending his hand, fixed his eyes, filled with a sort of severe astonishment, upon his son. The young man



approached the table. Thus they confronted each other for a second or two, motionless and in silence. Then,

“Father, you do not extend your hand. You do well—Your son is a disgraced man.”

“I were slow to believe it,” said the stern, ancient man before him, standing there in all his rugged, giant, and still unbent dignity and strength. “I were slow to believe *that*, of any Langford of Ravenscliffe. I did not hear rightly; say again, Randal Langford.”

“Father, you see a man before you, disgraced in the world’s eye, but faithful to your own principles. One who has refused to wash out a stain in blood; the stain must, therefore, remain indelible.”

“I do not understand thee, Randal. But, if it be in defence of the principles of a God-fearing house that the sons of Belial, with their empty scoffings, have beset thee, heed it not.—Thou art still a Langford—thou art still Randal Langford, and my son.”

“Father, I have been insulted; and

I have refused, as the phrase goes, to demand satisfaction—to redeem my honour by sending a challenge, in short—and therefore, in the eye of the world, the brand is ineffaceable.”

“And what is the eye of the world?” replied the father, deliberately resuming his seat, but still without extending his hand, or offering the slightest demonstration of paternal affection towards his son; “what is the eye of the world, that we should stand in awe of it? There is One eye, One all-seeing eye, which penetrates the thick darkness, and sees the hidden as well as the overt acts of men—sees to visit and to punish.—*That Eye we may fear.* A Langford of Ravenscliffe fears no other.—What is the eye of the world?”

The son’s countenance kindled a little; yet his spirit within him uttered a low groan as he said, with a strange mixture of something between audacity and levity, “I am glad to see you consider it thus, sir; for your son has been horsewhipped!”

The old man started up with a shrill cry, sank back again in his chair, and

turned deadly pale. So pale that he seemed almost dying.—He was speechless.

Randal Langford eyed him with a peculiar expression. He stood there gazing steadily at his father; and there was contempt and bitter rage mingled in his countenance. Ay, that countenance seemed to say, “You! Even you!—With all your vaunted contempt for the opinion of man,—See how you like it! See how you take it!” Without deigning to pity his father’s agony, he went on driving the shaft into the wound with all his force.

“Yes, sir! that’s it. Horsewhipped, at high noon, in the public walk at the back of St. John’s College, Cambridge. The walks being then crowded. . . . . There was one means, and one only means in the world’s eye for wiping out the stain from a gentleman’s honour; but you had taught me to despise that means as cowardly and despicable, as fearing the face of man, rather than that of God. I have held to your principles, and *my* principles, sir.—And see how you take it!”

The old man uttered a low groan.

“See! what I am to expect,” his son went on passionately. “See what I am to expect from others as the reward of such adherence to such principles—Your God-fearing, courageous, would-be-lofty principles! See what I am to expect,—what I am to expect! You yourself give me a sample of it,—You yourself despise and groan over me.”

“What had you done?”

“Done! What had I done! Is *that* the question? What was I likely to have done? *I* done!”

“What had you done to provoke this?”

“Provoke this! Are you going to sit in judgment upon me, sir? Hear evidence. Try the cause between me and the rascally young madman who dared to insult me? Pack up your things, sir, and away to Cambridge,—hear what they have to say for themselves,—Bid me ask their pardon for my rough northern truths—You will get no detailed explanation from me.”

“I shall not ask it.—Your rude violence to the father, who should be in the place of God to you, is enough.”

“ This, then ! This, then ! ” exclaimed Langford with a loud and bitter cry, “ is the greeting I receive at home. This, then, is the way my father, my own father, receives the news of my disgrace ! Oh ! curses, eternal curses, on the hound who branded me ! And may God forget to forgive me, if ever I forgive him.”

And so saying he turned away—seized the servant’s candle, which yet stood upon the table,—and hurried to his own room. He entered, flung-to the door, and locked himself in.

---

No real cordiality from this time was ever restored between father and son. They were both of too unbending natures. No further explanation was asked by the one, or offered by the other. They met the next morning with cold civility, as if nothing had happened between them. Anything like exchange of feeling would, in any case, still more after what had passed, have been impossible between them.



But his mother ? it will be asked. Did not the son seek some comfort from his mother ?—He never thought of it.

Mrs., or Madam Langford, as she usually was called, was a cold, stiff, rigid woman ; with one of those sour, puritan faces, which one sometimes sees in old portraits among families of that descent. She was a woman of undeviating rectitude of conduct, strong piety, and a severe sense of duty ; but, to use the illustration of the eminent French author, there was in her that separation between *la chaleur et la lumière*—between warmth and light—between feeling and intellect,—between the heart and the mind, which he ascribes to the arch-father of evil himself.

The education she had given her son had been frigid as her temper. In her opinion all fond caresses, all endearing indulgences, far more any of the sweet flatteries of partiality and affection, were weak and culpable.

Mrs. Langford never caressed her son. She exacted from him the extremest respect, an undeviating regularity of con-



duct, and strict obedience. The child had never been fondled,—the boy never indulged,—the youth never excused. This mother, false to her post, had not been the medium through which the austere affection of the father came softened and sweetened to the son. And, to tell the truth, Randal Langford loved his father much more than he did his mother; for the stern reserve of the one was less unnatural, less uncongenial to feeling, than the cold chastened composure of the other.

Father and mother were sitting together at the formal breakfast-table, when the son, guilty for once in his life of the irregularity of being too late, made his appearance. He did not speak, but coldly saluted his parents.

Mr. Langford, who was reading the newspaper, just raised his head, acknowledged the salute, and resumed his occupation. Mrs. Langford, sitting there before her tea-urn, rinsing her cups, as little demonstrative as if she had been a mere machine of propriety, turned her sour features, now filled with an expression of

grave displeasure, towards him, saying gravely, "You are late this morning, Randal."

For worlds would she not have been persuaded to say more, to look kind, to give him even one glance of sympathy and compassion. She was a woman of a haughty, as well as of a frigid temper, and her whole soul—for she could feel bitterly, though not warmly—had been filled with the deepest mortification at what she had heard. That her son should have left his college without writing, without consulting his parents; that he should, some way or other, have exposed himself to the degrading punishment he had received; and that, some way or other, he had not managed to avenge the disgrace, was bitterer than bitterest wormwood to her stern spirit. It was the habit of her mind always to suppose blame where blame could be supposed, and to visit mistakes, faults, or crimes,—it made little difference to her which,—with the same unsparing severity. She could not quarrel with her son because he had not fought a

duel, that would have been too grossly inconsistent with her avowed principles ; but she found the food for that censure in which it was her habit upon such occasions to seek consolation, by assuming, as a fact, that Randal must have been greatly to blame, — must have indulged the defects of his disposition and manners to a very unpardonable degree, before he could have drawn down upon himself such extraordinary chastisement.

Mrs. Langford was not far wrong in her conclusions, it must be acknowledged ; but she was shamefully wrong in her behaviour. She ought to have remembered who it was that, under the icy coldness of her rule, thus blighted every genial feeling ; whose proud assumption of superiority above others had set the example of insolent contempt for every one whose principles or practice fell short of his own. She ought to have pitied, have softened, have healed, the cruel wounds under which he smarted. She ought to have done everything, in short, which she did not do.

She had resolved within herself that all reproaches would be vain, and would only, indeed, show a weak indulgence of regretful feelings, therefore she made none ; but imposed upon herself a total silence as regarded the subject. As she could not approve—as the occasion was past—and it was futile to blame, she forbade to herself the slightest recurrence to the event. She took refuge in that worst alternative in such cases—an awful, portentous, a barren dreary silence, far worse in its effects upon family harmony than the most passionate and stormy explanations.

So Randal Langford took his place at his father's board again, as if the episode of his life at the University had not been. The notice of his expulsion, on account of his sudden absence, unaccounted for and unapologized for, in due time reached his father.

Mr. Langford opened the letter, and handed it first in silence to his wife, and then, without note or comment, to his son. These three read it, and not one word was

uttered, and not the slightest symptom of feeling or sympathy betrayed.

Such things deepened the evil. The days of the young man were mostly spent in gloomy solitude of thought,—brooding over his wrongs. Thus the implacable temper in which he had met them was strengthened. The deep ineffaceable hatred he made it his pride, as it was his sole consolation to cherish against Fitzroy, was rendered still more bitter by the alienation, which had gradually in this silent manner grown up between him and his parents. Randal was not without a heart. He had a power of very deep passionate affection. So much the worse was this for him now; his very sensibility to better feelings turned against him. He deeply resented the conduct of his parents, more especially that of his mother; and his heart thus left to eat itself, he was fast sinking into apathetic misanthropy, when he was awakened to new life, to a new scene—By whom? Or by what?

## CHAPTER IV.

ELEANOR WHARNCLIFFE was Randal Langford's second or third cousin. In the sullen gloom which had fallen upon him since his return from Cambridge, Randal Langford had shunned all general society, and had remained obstinately shut up at Ravenscliffe, positively refusing to accept any invitations, or to accompany his father or mother in the formal dinner visits they were accustomed to pay at stated, but somewhat distant, intervals in the neighbourhood.

This, however, lasted so long, and the strange apathy of his manners, and the singularity of his son's habits was so rapidly increasing, that though the formal



insensibility of the mother was neither aroused nor alarmed, the father, made of more benevolent stuff,—for in natures of this sort the man's heart is out-and-out tenderer than the woman's,—began to be uneasy.

He loved his son, though he never, during that son's life, had been known to give him one single proof of cordial affection; but he loved him, and his love was in a way returned. The father and son were, after all, of congenial natures. Iron outside, but heart of flesh at the core. Not like the mother,—without a heart.

The father understood the bitter feelings of the son, though he could hardly be said to compassionate them. He was not made for the meltings of compassion, but he understood the sufferings of a spirit so proud, under such circumstances; and in silence admired the stoicism of his haughty and invincible reserve. At last, as this determined avoidance of all social intercourse evidently began to increase, till, from declining all communication

with men of his own rank, it gradually assumed the form of an almost total avoidance of every human being—even the ordinary communication with the dependants of the family being shunned as much as possible—as day after day passed in almost total silence, whilst the deepening gloom of the stern and resentful countenance, showed the dark feelings that overpowered the heart—Mr. Langford became more and more uneasy, and at last he broke silence with his wife.

“Rachel,” he said, “I don’t like our son’s looks.”

“Like them, Mr. Langford! I should not suppose anybody could much like them. Randal is unamiable in every relation of life. I do not wonder that he makes no friends.”

“I am afraid he suffers much under this obstinate stoicism which he affects.”

“Suffer! No, I should not think he exactly suffered; but I confess his singularity is unpleasant to his friends.”

“Unpleasant!—Alarming, would be my word.”

“I see no cause whatsoever for alarm. His health is good, his morals are irreproachable; and where can a young man be better than at the home of his father? Secured from all the evil influences of a vicious world. I own I wish he had a little more energy about him, and could take pleasure in relieving you, by entering into some of your affairs—but I don’t know, perhaps it is best as it is. Randal is of so unbending and intractable a temper, that it would be difficult to transact any business in partnership with him.”

“So I have thought, and have not attempted it—But madam, have you never reflected that this is not the way the heir of Ravenscliffe can go on for ever? Have you never thought of marrying him?”

“Marrying him! It is time enough to think of that,—Time enough to bring a daughter-in-law to flout my gray hairs this ten years hence.”

“I do not agree with you. I think our son is rapidly sinking into a state of habitual gloom and melancholy, which may terminate in the very worst conse-

quences. It will not be the first time such things have happened at Ravenscliffe, if family tradition say true."

"Do you mean he will go mad? No no, set your heart at rest; weak people go mad. Such iron-tempered beings as Randal Langford may drive others mad,—They seldom go mad themselves."

"You speak strangely, Mrs. Langford. You use terms, with a strange familiarity, which it makes a man shudder to hear applied, even ever so remotely, to his son. Melancholy is not actual madness, but to the sufferer I believe it often proves worse."

"Sufferer!—Melancholy!—Let him exert himself and shake it off, then."

"Let us exert *ourselves* and help him to shake it off, madam, it would rather become a mother to say," replied Mr. Langford, sternly; for he was shocked at the insensibility she showed. It aroused all that was wise and good within himself. "I am persuaded," he went on, "that nothing but marriage can save Randal, and restore him to himself and society. Among new connections and new interests, the wretched

circumstances of his University life will be forgotten. Time has passed over, and thrown these things into the distance; raise up new objects, and they will be seen and thought of no longer."

"And may I ask whom you have in your eye—whom you may purpose to marry him to. Or, how you intend to bring him, in the first place, to suffer himself to be introduced; in the second, to court; in the third, to espouse the young lady—he, who absolutely refuses, say what his father and mother can, to leave the precincts of Ravenscliffe, or enter under any roof but this? There seems to me invincible difficulties to be overcome, even on the very threshold of your plan."

"I have been thinking of Eleanor Wharncliffe."

"Eleanor Wharncliffe!"

Mrs. Langford mused a little while, and then she added, "Really, no bad idea. I beg your pardon, Mr. Langford, for what I have said. I think Eleanor Wharncliffe might do very well."

"Her father and mother have been

spending nearly eighteen months at Cheltenham, as you know, whilst the house at Lydcote Hall has been undergoing repair. Partly for that reason, partly upon the score of Eleanor's health. But Wharncliffe writes me word that they are now about to return home. We do not lie much out of their way. I was thinking of inviting her father and mother to pay us a visit here; and as Eleanor must of course accompany them, there would be one difficulty got over. Randal could not, after this visit, well refuse to accompany us to return it. Being blood relations, I don't imagine he would object to it,—indeed, I fancy inclination would not be wanting upon his side. It is some years since they have met—it was long before he went to College. But the only little girl I ever saw Randal affect was the delicate, timid little cousin of his, who used to be so afraid of the dogs, and of the old tower, and of the Raven's oak, of the dark, and of everything. I have seen our boy lifting her in his arms, very tenderly, I can assure you, when Nero has



been bounding about, and she screaming with terror, and Wharncliffe rating her for her folly."

"A slight foundation to build a foolish love-tale upon, I fear," said Mrs. Langford, with a grim smile; "but now you recall the circumstances, I recollect them too; and remember thinking our dark, strong boy, and that little, soft, fair-haired thing, offered a pretty contrast enough."

"Wharncliffe wishes to marry her, I know; because, having married a woman without a portion himself, and being resolved not to charge the estate and encumber it for his son, there will not be much provision for this daughter of his. Having no younger children myself, and you, madam, having brought so handsome a dowry into the family, I am happy to say we are above the necessity of regarding money in our alliances. The Wharncliffes are of a most honourable and ancient house. What say you to it, Mrs. Langford?"

"That I think it will do very well.

Have you heard how she grew up?—As well-favoured as she promised to be?”

“They tell me she is surpassingly beautiful.”

In all alliances of this formal nature, it has often surprised me to see how much beauty counts,—frequently more with the parents and friends than with the young espoused himself. With them it seems a sort of property, of the nature of a positive possession—a source of pride—a proper dignity and distinction; with him, it is but one quality of her he loves, which might be dispensed with. If he love truly, it is not the beauty which he loves.

Severe as Mrs. Langford's notions were, she was quite open to this weakness. That any daughter-in-law of hers should be anything but beautiful, would have been quite derogatory to her ideas of fitness and propriety. That Eleanor Wharncliffe was very distinguishedly so was, like other distinctions, very agreeable to her sense of dignity—to her pride. She thought little of it as it concerned her son's happiness; she did not even calculate upon the

chances of this remarkable beauty winning his affections, and ensuring his consent to the marriage. That the heir of Ravenscliffe should reject an alliance arranged for him by his parents, never entered her head.

The Wharncliffes were second or third cousins to the present Mr. Langford, as I think I have mentioned.

---

It was not without emotion that Randal Langford, as he was sitting the next day in his usual moody silence at dinner, listened to the following conversation, which took place, not altogether undesignedly, between his father and mother.

“It really is so long,” began the mistress of the house, “since we have had any guests at Ravenscliffe, that the best bed-room will want some putting to rights. The furniture is *too* antiquated. I must have a new dressing-glass, at all events, and an arm-chair or two, and a small table to stand in the middle of the room for

writing-materials,—and a couch at the foot of the bed would not be amiss. People furnish so luxuriously now—and Lady Wharncliffe is quite of the new school, of course.”

“Get what you like, madam. It will be best, perhaps, to have Tidcombe over from Durham, to see what is wanting, and set all to rights.”

Mr. Langford with pleasure observed his son start as his mother pronounced the name of Wharncliffe, and raise his head, and look up with an expression of interest to which his countenance had long been a stranger, as his father went on :

“What room did you think of putting Eleanor in? Choose a warm one, she is still very delicate.”

“I thought to put her into the one next her mother’s.—It has a southern aspect, and commands a pretty view. But I was going to speak to you of that.—It will require to be new furnished throughout.”

The young man’s eyes had already dropped again; yet it was evident he was listening attentively.

“Get things nice and pretty, and without regard to expense, Mrs. Langford. I hear she is grown up a sweet creature, and nothing can be too good for her.”

“Well, I will write to Tidcombe by this night’s post. When do they talk of leaving Cheltenham?”

“In about a fortnight from this time. They have some visits to pay on their way, but in about a month, more or less, Wharncliffe tells me I may expect them here.”

“I wish it could have been a little earlier. But we have often some fine days at the end of October.”

Langford was a stoic by nature, little given to any of the softer or tenderer moods. The greater the wonder, that his heart was beating fast, and faster, and his frame beginning to quiver with a strange sense of joy, as he listened to what was going on.

Eleanor Wharncliffe! And at the name what a host of sweet recollections and associations were summoned up. The dear pretty little creature! that he, a sullen reserved boy, who loved nobody, and whom nobody loved, had in his secret heart doted

upon—doted as human beings dote upon the object of their sole idolatry. The little, timid, delicate child! afraid of everything but her mother and himself. Afraid of Mr. and Mrs. Langford, and very particularly afraid of her own father, who had adopted the ill-judged plan of attempting to shame and frighten the little girl out of her invincible cowardice. If Mrs. Langford remembered the protection which the late dark boy had afforded to the fair little girl against her enemies the dogs—much more might he.

The scenes of days past away now rose with all that soft pleasure with which the days of a boyhood spent like that of Randal Langford's, recur. A happy boyhood after all it had been, spent at home, amid scenes so beloved, and in ways so congenial to his nature. He had wanted little society. A few boys, his inferiors in rank and consequence, had sufficed him; for he loved to domineer, and could ill brook the slightest opposition. These circumstances, we may remark however by the way, had acted unfortunately upon his disposition.



The absence of that discipline which children of the same rank and age exercise over each other, had increased his native insolence, and had rendered him, as we have seen, quite unfit to mingle with the world in general. He, who has not been well knocked about as a boy, by his fellow-boys, seldom makes an amiable man. This Randal Langford had never been; the only contradiction he had met with was from his own parents—more especially from his cold and passionless mother; and perhaps it would be hard to decide, whether the discipline of the drawing-room, or the license of the play-ground, was the most injurious to the boy's character. Be that as it may, one thing is certain, that Randal looked back to the days of his boyhood with pleasure; and of such days, those he most loved to remember of all, were passed when the little Eleanor Wharncliffe had been visiting at his father's house.

She had been a sweet, gentle-tempered child; extremely timid, silent, shy, and reserved in general; but when happy and at her ease, and feeling *safe*, positively in-

telligent, and possessing an innocent gaiety which was perfectly enchanting. And she always felt safe with Randal.

Randal was, as you have heard, a great, tall, dark, rather alarming-looking fellow, and among his boy companions violent and overbearing; but with this little creature it was quite different. As they never came into opposition in any way, the harsh features of his character were not called into action. The little thing seemed not in the least afraid of him; clung to him in every danger, followed him about wherever he went, seemed happy when she was holding his hand, and safe from every peril, either of man or beast, when sheltered in his arms. This softness, this dependence, this security, the playful sweetness when they were safe and alone, the little creeping to his side as if to seek refuge when they were in company—first found its way to that heart; and, as frequently happens in such cases, where there is but one strong affection cherished, this was felt with an intensity little consistent with his other feelings. It is true that of late years this youthful

love had been little thought of amid the fierce contests of his university life, and the outrage with which they had terminated; under his bitter sense of these things, and that deep resentment of injury which he most cherished, every thought and feeling had seemed so completely occupied, that there appeared room for no softer affection.

But now, like those gentle-working, indistinct streams of thought, which will be sometimes awakened by a strain of loved and long-forgotten music, at the mention of Eleanor's name feelings of sweetness which had not visited his heart for many, many years, began to revive, and to shed a tender softness over his spirit, "smoothing the raven down of darkness till it smiled." The beautiful little blue-eyed girl, with that soft face of hers resting against his bosom, as he sheltered her from the huge, terrible Nero, the great, barking bloodhound, — that beautiful, soft, flaxen hair, so soft as to be entirely without curl, lying like a shower of unspun silk over his breast,

—that sweet face, lifted up to him with a look of grateful reliance,—those soft eyes, meeting his, so full of mingled love and terror,—terror that was abating,—and gentle smiles that were coming again,—one of those little, delicate, childish arms thrown fondly round his neck,—oh ! how his strong heart throbbed with the sweetest, purest affections !

Then the scene would change to the drawing-room. There would be a party,—an awful dinner-party,—a circle of guests to be entertained. He hated a formal circle as much as any one could do, and had done so more especially when a boy ; but he scorned to feel nervous at that or anything. He had, indeed, been brought up in so high a sense of his own importance, even from a baby, that the idea of fearing the face of any man living, in society or out of society, never entered his mind. He would come into any circle,—reserved and surly, it might be,—but never in the slightest degree discomposed.

Now he remembered those days vividly, when Sir John and Lady Wharncliffe

would be upon a visit at Ravenscliffe, and their two children, Everard, the son and heir, and the little Eleanor with them. Sir John and Lady Wharncliffe were in strange contrast with the Lord and Lady of Ravenscliffe; and the friendship that subsisted between the parties can only be accounted for by the family connection and pretty close relationship that united them on that one subject, and which, however differently displayed, they held to excess and in common, namely—family pride. The haughty, exclusive sense of inborn superiority; the insolent contempt for every creature, be he who he might,—however gifted, however accomplished, however excellent or distinguished,—wanting in that essential quality—was common to both, and carried in both to the same absurd and offensive extent.

In the Langfords this form of pride was enhanced and rendered still more unamiable by the spiritual pride which they cherished as members of a stern and exclusive religious sect. In Sir John Wharncliffe it was rendered more triumphantly



overbearing by the advantages of a fine person, the manners and accomplishments which large converse with the world tends to produce,—gay spirits, an abundance of words, ready laughter, and, above all, a temper insensible and cold as a rock. These gay spirits, when they are united to such a temper, render a man's heart harder than the nether millstone.

Lady Wharncliffe was a woman of fashion,—a woman of the world ; a mere woman of fashion,—a mere woman of the world ; and all is said. She had all the ready good sense,—the knowledge of society,—of human nature, as it displays itself in general society,—the *savoir vivre*, in short, which renders “the children of this world wiser in their generation than the children of light.” She was as totally wanting in that wisdom from above,—those qualities essential to the higher life, which belong to the children of that better sphere. But she was not without her amiable points neither. She was naturally good-natured and kind-hearted, and never intentionally gave, and always intention-



ally avoided giving pain, to feelings, be they such as she understood. But then her range of sympathy was narrow, as was her range of thought. How came the sensitive little girl to belong to such parents ?

The brother was just as he should have been,—a handsome, high-spirited, lively, gentleman-like boy, alike devoid of everything the least above the most ordinary common-place in perception or feeling.

Made to be the ornament of society, and the admiration of all the world, ready—clever—assured—gay—ignorant, and empty; informed in all that belonged to to-day—ignorant of everything that was beyond to-day—assured, because incompetent to comprehend the existence of anything above his own sphere of thought—clever, because confident in his own abilities, the extent of which he had no standard by which to measure—gay, because always pleased with himself, and certain to please others.

He was the idol of both father and mother; their heir, their representative,

their personal selfishness in a concrete form. And, as Mr. Langford has hinted, to this idol they were unhesitatingly prepared to sacrifice the pecuniary interests of their little daughter. Her poor hundreds were diminished to swell his tens of thousands. What was respectability—even liberty—necessity even, as regarded her comfort, in comparison with the requirements of idle luxury and unnecessary display on his? Yet they were not in other respects without a certain regard for her well-being; the father in some degree, the mother far more. They wished to marry Eleanor well, as the phrase runs; that is, to settle her in a rank above her present position, if possible, and elevate her in the world of society. This was a duty they felt to be imperative, second only to that of keeping the estate unencumbered for their son.

In pursuit of this object, to be sure they never considered the happiness of the being in question. Suitability of temper, sympathy of affection, the personal worth and virtue of the intended husband—such considerations never entered their circle of

thought. To marry her *well*—what the world calls well—where there would be wealth, connection, and station, all three, if possible; but two at least indispensable—this was their object to attain, and every duty to their child would be fulfilled.

How came Eleanor to be what she was, so descended, so brought up as she had been?

It is vain to inquire after the cause of these strange contradictions to the ordinary rule of descents and races; but when such things occur, they too often produce much secret misery in the unhappy exception.

Eleanor Wharncliffe possessed a heart and temper of the most exquisite susceptibility and tenderness; an intellect fine to the last degree, though not strong. Rarely in women, does that which is so finely tempered prove strong. Delicacy, and a something fragile, seems almost an essential attendant upon extraordinary moral or intellectual beauty. In the instance before us, this was eminently the case.

From her earliest infancy, her moral

and mental gifts had proved to her but a source of suffering—consequently of physical injury. The exquisite delicacy of her perceptions, formed to distinguish excellence in its finest developments—the softness and tenderness of her heart—her innate moral sense of all that was high and good—had been in the twilight of the childish life, sources of continual misery.

Her whole circle of thought and experience had been peopled with giants and spectres of her own creating; or rather created by the contradiction between herself and all that surrounded her.

To her tender spirits, and sweet, loving temper, the indifference of her father—the careless, uncertain fondness of her mother—the sharp reproofs too often received from the man of the world, when through timidity, or delicacy of feeling, she failed in the observance of some of those duties of the world, which he exacted without distinction of times, feelings, power, or inefficiency, from his children—were cruel causes of anguish. She did not know what she wanted; but she wanted some-

thing : she did not know what she feared ; but she feared greatly. She never felt unhappy without longing to shed her tears upon some kind bosom ; but her mother hated crying children, and either scolded, or laughed at her when she wept ; calling her a foolish little thing, and bidding her, if she could not give over, to go into the nursery till she had done.

In one sense Lady Wharncliffe was right thus to check the effusions of sensibility on the part of her daughter. What had sensibility and the world in which Eleanor's life was to pass to do with each other ?

With her father the terrible, terrible difficulty to overcome was, her shyness. And this timidity, as he managed it, was sure to increase ; and to be in danger of terminating in habitual weakness of the nerves. In fact, such was the consequence which ensued from his treatment—and I know not a greater cause of misery, than to have at once encroaching demands made upon strength, and diminished powers of answering them.

Every time her father saw Eleanor in



company with other little lively, happy, and perhaps somewhat precocious children of her own age, he felt mortified and angry. His pride was offended to see his daughter shrinking from observation, whose place, as he considered it, ought to have been among the foremost. He could not endure to find his little girl overlooked, when others, with far inferior pretensions, were exciting general attention, and making their own parts good.

The sentence which so often greeted him, "A sweet little gentle creature, and so pretty; it's a pity she's so shy," uttered with a kind of contemptuous compassion by the proud mothers of more forward and admired children, galled him to the quick.

He would laugh and reply, "Yes, poor little thing." But in this case he could not carry things off with the usual ready assurance which in his intercourse with the world rarely failed, and enabled him to practise one of its grand secrets—never to own to a defeat or a disappointment, but in every defect to find a quality,



an advantage in every sinister accident. He was too really vexed at heart to be ready with the retort he might justly have given — too much out of temper to use his powers of polite sarcasm in return, and to compliment the mothers upon the precocity of the little premature men and women about him. He was angry, and so he was unjust ; and he visited upon the poor little girl the mortification he felt.

Angry reproaches for her want of courage ; contemptuous ridicule of her awkwardness and silence ; and imperious orders that she should behave better in future, were not exactly the means calculated to raise the spirits or brace the nerves of the sensitive young creature.

How vividly did Langford recall these things as he sat there by the dinner-table, silent but attentive.

His memory pictured the little creature as he came down dressed before dinner, when the drawing-room was already half full, and the merry ringing laugh of Sir John Wharncliffe might be heard even whilst he himself was yet upon the stairs.

How Randal used to hate that ever-ready, half insolent, half gay, and to him, most unfeeling laugh!

At such times there would often be found, waiting near the drawing-room door, a delicate little girl, in a white frock and white sash, with her face and arms of the colour of the tenderest blush rose, faintly tinted with pink; her fair, long, soft hair, combed smoothly and simply round her face, and falling in floods as of silk over her sweet, childish, waxen shoulders; two lovely blue eyes, beseechingly cast up to him; the pretty, small, chubby hand extended towards him, as she stood there, with her grave, kind, good old nurse beside her. Thus she would stand expecting him. The rough boy's large hand would soon be holding in its firm protecting grasp those little quivering fingers, the gentle confiding clasp of which seemed to entwine itself round his inmost heart; and thus they would enter the awful drawing-room together. Sir John was far from looking ill-pleased when this

happened to be the case. He would come up, and, with more cordiality than usual, shake his little girl by the hand; would lead her, with her head a little upon one side, and hanging modestly downwards, to present her to some friend or other, and then restore her to liberty and to her Randal again.

She used to look so excessively pretty and interesting thus companioned, that the contrast could not fail to strike everybody. Sir John seemed particularly to admire it.

## CHAPTER V.

Though thoughts, deep-rooted in my heart,  
Like pine-trees dark and high,  
Subdue the light of noon, and breathe  
A low and ceaseless sigh,—  
This memory brightens o'er the past,  
As when the sun concealed  
Behind some cloud that near us hangs,  
Shines on a distant field.

LONGFELLOW.

SUCH silent reveries as that in which Randal Langford was indulging, take longer in the description than they do in the actual passage through the mind. His father and mother had not finished discussing the subject of the rooms, before he lifted up his head, and his face quite changed, so much was its

habitual gloom dispersed, showed the interest he was taking in what was going on. In fact, it was no slight change which had taken place within him at the mention of that almost forgotten name. He had suffered the cloudy melancholy,—that melancholy which proceeds from the indulgence of the unamiable feelings and adverse passions to become almost habitual, and nothing that occurred at Ravenscliffe seemed likely to remove it; but these tender recollections, thus revived, of the happiest moments, perhaps, literally, the only really happy moments of his life, worked wonders.

The utter alienation from his father and mother in which he had permitted himself to indulge, and which had rendered the gloom of his mind so intolerable, seemed dissipated.

But he knew not, and cared not why it was, or how it was, the master feeling of his mind—the hatred he cherished against the man who had injured him, still remained unsoftened by these kindlier feelings. That sentiment lay deep in the

recesses of his heart, passive, because no circumstances occurred to revive it, but not the less permanent and ineffaceable. The resentment he had felt against his father and mother, for what he considered their injustice and insensibility, on the contrary, had been a cause of daily irritation; but it vanished completely under the train of thoughts and feelings now presented.

He thought of Eleanor Wharncliffe, and of the years gone by. A healing balm seemed to soothe the wounds of his spirit; he lifted up his head with something like cheerfulness, and listened to the talk between his father and mother.

“Extremely delicate, Lady Wharncliffe writes me word, but grown surpassingly beautiful.”

“Abroad a year or two, and then a year and a half at Cheltenham. Four years, I think, since they were last here.”

“You may say five, next November.”

“Well, give her the room you mentioned, madam, and spare no expense in making her comfortable. This return of the Wharncliffes shall be celebrated by



us something in the manner of royal visits. . . . I wonder whether Sir John laughs as much as he used to do."

"Probably.—His laughter was of a sort not to diminish with years.—It came little from the heart. A mere trick! Yet Sir John is a sensible man."

"So I have always thought, but could have wished him a little more solidity."

Mrs. Langford sighed.

"They are people of *this* world," said she, sententiously; "both he and dear Lady Wharncliffe. Too much so, I fear—but time and advancing years may do much.—There are the seeds of good—and who knows what the quiet of the country, and associations somewhat different from those which they have lately been accustomed to may do for him and poor Lady Wharncliffe? We ought never to despair of any one."

For she was resolved, and so was Mr. Langford resolved, to find nothing amiss in the Wharncliffes. Their charitable views of their friends' characters and conduct being mightily aided by their secret

inclinations. I should have liked to have heard what they would have said of the Wharncliffes if they had not been friends of their own, connections of whom they were not a little proud!

---

Randal keeps walking up and down the gravel walk which runs along the summit of the cliff, and commands a view of the carriage-road, waiting the arrival of the expected guests. His heart is throbbing in a strange way, and the whole man experiencing a sense of happiness to which he had long been a stranger,—great, it might be called exquisite, happiness,—intoxicating as new wine to one little accustomed to it.

“More beautiful than ever—more delicate than ever!” The words were not forgotten. He pictured her the same sweet, endearing creature whom he had loved so well. He never asked himself whether all the rest would continue upon the same footing, — whether this lovely

creature would remain inclined to love him as a man, in the way she had done as a boy. Still less did he recollect that, love him or not, there could not, in the nature of things, be the same artless display of her feelings. But he troubled not his head with these questions. He kept picturing her to himself the same in all respects, except that the child had bloomed into the woman; and a woman he had already appropriated to himself. A something in his father and mother's manner, indeed, might have justified this feeling, had he sought, which he did not, either to justify or to account for it.

He had, in old days, been accustomed so entirely to consider Eleanor Wharncliffe as his own peculiar possession, and she had so invariably seemed to admit the claim, and to cling to him as her sole friend and protector, that now they were to meet again, his heart, as a matter of course, renewed the feeling.

Besides, a man heir to a large estate, representative of an ancient family, and *saturated* with the sense of his own high

claims and pretensions, does not usually anticipate much difficulty in pressing his suit upon any disengaged woman.

So he walked up and down the terrace in a state of comfort and satisfaction to which he had very long been a stranger. Delivered from what might have been almost called the monomania of exasperated feelings, his mind seemed restored to health; to varied natural interests and feelings. And I know few sensations more pleasant than this restoration to a sound, from a morbid state of mind: the convalescence of the body is nothing to it.

It was a fine day, towards the latter end of November,—say what they will of November, it has its charming days;—a slight frost had crisped the air, and a soft mistiness hung upon the landscape, giving a mysterious indistinctness to the groups of trees and the rocks, and the outlines of the more distant hills; whilst the full but transparent river, coursing rapidly along, sparkled in the sunbeam. The day was in harmony with his feelings, subdued, softened as they were; and he walked and

watched, and mused, in tranquil enjoyment of the inner peace so lately acquired, till at length the distant roll of an approaching carriage was heard. And soon a gay landau and four, with a couple of servants attending on horseback, was to be seen emerging from the woods, and taking the road by the river side. Now it is at the foot of the ascent—now it slowly mounts the hill.

He watched it some moments, hesitating whether to go at once to the door, as his impatience urged him, or to wait till he was summoned. His impatience decided the matter, and before the carriage had swept round the grass-plat at the back of the house, Randal was standing, the foremost figure of all in attendance, upon the steps; his father and mother remained waiting in the hall.

Mr. Langford observed with considerable pleasure the evident excitement of his son; but the mother remained cold, and, as usual, little observant of that in which the happiness of others was concerned.

The landau was not open, even the windows were drawn up, to shelter the



travellers from the slight chilness of the day. It stopped, and, as Langford looked impatiently within, displayed nothing but a confused heap of bonnets, cloaks, baskets, boxes, and all those wearisome matters with which some ladies love to surround themselves when travelling. But the door is opened, and out first issues Sir John. He is dressed in a thick fur-lined coat, or cloak, which was then called a *roquelaure*, muffled up from head to foot; and he is no sooner liberated than he begins to stamp with his feet, exclaiming, in no measured terms, against the confounded coldness of the weather; and making, as Randal thinks, a great fuss and noise. He, however, speedily turns to the carriage,—to which, after a slight salute to Randal, he gives his whole attention. The next person who appears is Lady Wharncliffe's maid, her hands full of bags and baskets,—an excessively spare young person, dressed in the pink of the Abigail mode, and appearing to regard herself as one not among the least important of the party. She



addresses Sir John with a sort of half-respectful familiarity, and orders the men-servants about as if she were the mistress herself. Then Lady Wharncliffe makes her appearance, — a thin fashionable-looking figure, rather above the common size, with the remains of much beauty, considerably the worse for wear, but, in spite of that, looking younger than she really is, and as if the traces upon her features were rather those of habitual dissipation and late hours than of age. She is not unpleasing upon the whole; for her face looks refined, and there is in it a great deal of loveliness, and a certain animation, subdued by habitual *ton*; yet there is nothing in it to interest, — no promise of much beyond what at first sight appears. She too, like Sir John, having descended, directs her first attention to the carriage; a woman of simple dress and manners, being Miss Wharncliffe's attendant, who came upon the box, now joins her. The footmen mount the wheels, the roof of the carriage is thrown back, and then a roll

of cloaks and furs, of silks and ermines, is with much care lifted down the carriage steps, and, attended by Sir John, my Lady, and the last-mentioned maid, is carried up the hall-steps and into the house. And Langford beholds the object of so much thought and expectation before him.

Her figure was entirely enveloped in the cloaks and furs that were wrapped round her ; her head was covered with a remarkably pretty black velvet travelling bonnet, in which were two feathers, falling most gracefully on one side, their dark shade setting off her pale, most delicate, and most beautiful features, to the greatest advantage, aided by the abundance of fair shining hair, which, a little disordered by the journey, streamed down upon each side. The loveliest blue eyes in the universe, full of gentle meaning, were lifted up to the servants who carried her into the house, as in low tones, most musical, she softly thanked them for the trouble they were taking.

She was carried at once into the drawing-room, the door of which stood open,

and laid upon the sofa. This being done, the parents upon each side exchanged very cordial greetings, and the introduction of his son, as a grown man, to Sir John and Lady Wharncliffe, was made by Mr. Langford, senior. Then they all adjourned to the drawing-room, where her maid was already busy in relieving Miss Wharncliffe from some of the heavy wraps. The young lady seemed rather faint, and they had untied her bonnet; and as she lay there, with the ribbons and feathers scattering round her face, the delicate frill of her habit-shirt encircling her throat, her fair hair in the greatest abundance scattering upon the sofa cushion upon which her head rested, and its rich golden hue showing almost like a glory—the extreme softness and tenderness—the spiritual expression of the face—and the delicate outline of the figure, were displayed to the utmost advantage. Altogether they formed a picture which Randal Langford, to his dying day, could never forget.

He stood a minute or two gazing in

silent ecstasy, whilst the others conversed together. At last Sir John turned to him and said, "Mr. Langford, I must present you again to my daughter; though I dare say her memory is more tenacious than mine; ha—ha—ha! Eleanor, my dear, I dare say you have not forgotten your cousin, Randal Langford—your champion in all difficulties and dangers? Though, by Jove, I hardly recognised you myself—So grown—so altered—ha—ha—ha! Well, shake hands and be friends—ha—ha—ha!"

Upon this the smallest, most delicate, most incomparable of hands, ungloved, and glittering with a few sparkling rings, was held out—Langford took it in his with a reverence, as if touching the fingers of an immortal.

He did not speak, nor did she,—but his large sinewy hand closed round, and pressed hers, firmly though very softly, as if to assure her that the old sentiments yet existed upon his side. The pressure was almost imperceptibly returned, the blue eyes being at the same time lifted to his face, with a sort of anxious,

wistful expression. There were the traces of much suffering in them,—that peculiar sadness that tells of habitual suffering. His raven black eyes, so full of deep earnest expression, met hers in return.

They were no longer strangers — The feelings of the gone-by years were at once restored; enhanced, on his side, at least, by new sentiments, which added incalculably to their power and vivacity. How it would be on hers remains to be proved.

The cloaks are removed, the young lady is arranged comfortably upon the sofa; Mrs. Langford has accompanied Lady Wharncliffe to put her in possession of her apartments; the two elder gentlemen stood talking at a window, from which Sir John Wharncliffe's ready laugh comes perpetually recurring, in a manner that may fatigue, but never exhilarates. But Langford has drawn a chair, and seated at the back of the sofa, which had been pushed towards the fire, remains silent, in a state of almost rapturous feeling, his eyes bent upon his gentle and



lovely cousin. It completed the charm, that, excessively as he admired her, she did not inspire him with the slightest feeling of that awe and shyness, which so generally, and so provokingly attend upon many a real passion.

She looked so softly, spoke so sweetly, seemed herself so ready to resume the fond familiarity of their childhood attachment, that everything approaching to unpleasant timidity and reserve was done away with. The tender blue eyes were raised to him with the most endearing look of confidence and reliance, just as it used to be when she was a child; and his dark countenance, bent towards hers, was filled with that which softened every harsher line and character. Thus subdued, the countenance of Randal Langford might be called really charming. They began to converse in low tones with each other; his usually harsh voice, modulated to harmony by the new feelings which possessed him—as for hers, it was ever low and musical: and thus, the two talked.

“Are you quite sure you would take



nothing?—You seem very much exhausted by your day's journey."

"No! I think not.—Not more tired than usual, I think.—I am never very strong, and this cold weather, my dear mother and Cary will insist upon wrapping me up in so many cloaks, that I am almost smothered.—I shall be quite comfortable in a short time."

"Let me move the pillow.—Is that right? And don't you like something laid over your chest?—Shall I stir the fire a little more? It seems to me cold here."

"Oh no, thank you. I am glad to feel the air of the room so fresh. My father likes to travel with the windows shut, and it always refreshes me to be out of the carriage again. This is a nice room," looking round.

"Do you think so? I am no great judge of rooms. I never think one room differs much from another. Sometimes I have thought the ceiling of this rather low—there have been times when it seemed to oppress, to smother me—but such things are mere fancies. . . ."

“Have you felt it so?”

“Yes.”

“I understand what you mean. . . .  
Yes—I could fancy, now you say it, that in certain moods one might feel this ceiling low and oppressive—but I have been so used—” to be miserable—was upon her lips, but she could not as yet quite open her heart so far, and she checked herself—“so used . . . . to large lofty *resounding* rooms—that—that . . . . Well I suppose it is human nature—one ever likes best what is new. You cannot think how snug and comfortable, these *rather* low and shady rooms seem to me.”

He smiled, and felt and looked pleased, and he said, “Do you remember the place well?”

“Every twig and stone about it, I think. I kept my face close to the carriage window after we had passed the lodge gate. Nothing seems much altered. That is very pleasant.—It is so painful to come back after a few years to a place that one has loved, and to find this improved, and that removed—and everything some

way or other changed. I do so hate such changes.—Are the ravens alive still?

“Undoubtedly. I believe the Langfords would think the roof tree of their house had fallen, if the ravens were to give over building in the old oak.”

“And what is become of Nero? The terrible Nero? Is he yet living? Do you know, Randal, I have dreamed of Nero often and often, and not very long ago either—and have awakened in a perfect paroxysm of terror as he jumped up and laid his great heavy paws upon my shoulders. I believe, if it were actually again to happen, I should screech like a wild thing yet.”

“Would you—” and he smiled, then added, “Poor old Nero! *his* bounding days are over. He still creeps about the place, but he is become as a very old man.”

“How pleasant it is,” she resumed after a short pause, “how pleasant and refreshing it is,” and she gave a sigh as if a load was being cast from her bosom, “to come back to a place where one has never been since one was a child. They

say—and of course it seems as if it must be so, that no one can retread his steps in life—that time rolled by, revolves no more—and yet, I feel just now, as if time *had* run back, and as if I was, at this very moment, much the same little thoughtless, happy, foolish, thing that I was in the days of Nero. Do you feel anything of this at meeting again, Randal? No; I suppose you can't."

"I don't know exactly what I feel," said he, bending upon her eyes filled with unutterable softness. "Whether it be as you say, that time has rolled back, or—No—it is not so—I am quite different from what I was then—All is different from what it was then."

"You do not look so *very* different—and I don't like to think you are so very different.—Don't say that again, Randal; let it be as it was then.—Cousin, you do not know how much I wish it—how much I have thought about it, expected from it—" she stopped herself.

"Have you?" said he; "Have you ever been so good as to think of me?"

“Think of you!—often and often,” and she sighed, and her head dropped a little, and she seemed overpowered with some painful recollection; then she roused herself with a slight gesture of impatience, as if she would forcibly shake off some unpleasant remembrance; and she looked round the room again, and laughed a little, and said,

“I declare it is just exactly what it was when I left it. There are the very things I used to think so beautiful—The lady with the lamb, and the lady with the cockatoo, and all your precious old ancestors, too, Randal—I used to manage to be afraid even of them. What a little fool I was! And how good-natured you used to be, you big boy. Boys of that age are usually such rough, unfeeling creatures, and so particularly fond of teasing little timid girls. Do you remember the delight Everard used to take in plaguing me—and how passionate you would be about it? How I used to stand and quiver, for very terror and pleasure, when you took my part; and you two were quarrelling about it despe-



rately. How my poor little heart used to thank you! Everard is a very different person now, Randal. He is a spruce young officer in one of his Majesty's crack regiments. He is esteemed as handsome as an angel, and the very pink of courtesy and good manners."

"He always promised to be very handsome.—To be the pink of courtesy and good manners is the natural consequence, I suppose, of belonging to one of his Majesty's crack regiments."

He felt a disagreeable sense of the contrast his own appearance might present.

The proudest men are humble to baseness when they truly love. He added, what under any other circumstances, his haughty spirit would have broken rather than have uttered—something to this effect; That those who had passed their time, shut up in retired country houses, must want many such advantages.

She did not take up this. She did not seem to notice the remark, or to think about him with reference to his external appearance. Her mind kept recurring to the past.



“Do you remember that beautiful summer’s day, when we were all three sitting under the dear old oak-tree, and watching the ravens feeding their young, whom we could hear fluttering, and attempting an infantile croak in the huge nest above? —The gravity of the indefatigable parents, flying so solemnly along in search of food, and the greedy screechings of the nursery full of children? Do you remember that particular day, Randal?”

“Yes—I remember it.”

“How Everard wanted to climb the tree; and how I screamed and cried because I was sure he would hurt himself; and how at last he lost all patience. Do you remember?”

“Oh yes, I remember.”

And well he did remember seeing Everard at last rudely push away the little, clinging girl, screaming, in an agony of terror, for his sake—and the blow with which he had at last accompanied the order to be quiet, and hold her noise—and the sudden rush of blood to his own temples; and the ecstasy of passion which blinded

him—and how he had rushed forward, and with one stroke of his foot levelled the coward to the earth—and how Everard had struck his forehead against a stone, and had bled profusely—and the agony of distress and remorse into which his little sister had been thrown—and the generosity with which she had forgotten all her own causes of complaint in her sense of her brother's sufferings—and yet, how, in the paroxysms of her distress, her heart had remained just, and grateful, and loving to himself; and how sulky Everard had been—and the tears she had shed before he would be reconciled—and how, when the reconciliation at last had been effected, her tears had ceased; but she kept sobbing and sobbing, as he sat upon the grass by her side, and her little head was leaned against his breast.

“You were always my champion,” she said—and again she looked into his eyes with the same searching, anxious, wistful expression which we have noticed when first they met.

His eyes were cast down at this mo-

ment, and she kept peeping under his eyelids, for he did not observe her; and then she seemed occupied in perusing his features, and scanning his figure, as if she were trying to understand him exactly. The expression of the face, softened as it was, had in it even now when she considered it with this attention, something stern and severe. And the strong-built figure; the large limbs, knit together as with sinews of iron, something in it almost approaching to the terrible.

The longer she looked, and the stronger this impression became, she began to wonder she could have spoken with so much childish ease and composure to this severe-looking man. But he soon raised his eyes again and then there was something in them,—a softness again pervading every feature when he looked at her,—which reassured her.

## CHAPTER VI.

Oh hush! may blest forgetfulness  
Our former being steep,  
And with its sorrows may its love  
In dead oblivion sleep.

MRS. ACTON TINDAL.

THE conversation between the two continued in the strain I have related, for some time longer, and every fresh quarter of an hour seemed by awakening fresh recollections of their old friendship, to draw them nearer to each other; but it was time to separate and dress for dinner. Lady Wharncliffe and Mrs. Langford reappeared, attended by Eleanor's maid.

“ Well, my love, how do you feel? Not so *very* much tired?”

“ Thank you, mamma,—very much less tired than I was yesterday,—don’t ring,” as her mother approached to put her hand upon the bell,—“ with a little help I feel quite equal to walking up-stairs.”

“ I don’t know for that—you are not a very prudent person. Always trying, Mrs. Langford, to do more than her strength is equal to. There is no end to our quarrels upon that subject. Nay, my darling, if you positively must and will,” as Eleanor, assisted by her maid, endeavoured slowly and with considerable difficulty to rise from the sofa, — “ Mr. Langford—Randal—perhaps you will be so good . . . ”

He had already risen, and stood there, waiting only for permission to resume some of his old offices of assistance and protection.

“ If Miss Wharncliffe will only give me leave; nay, Eleanor, it is but as it used to be—let me support you.” And he put his arm under the pillow, and with one slight effort raised her at once; and still keeping his arm round her, supported her as

there she stood, tottering and uncertain upon the floor.

She had looked up at him as he did so, her soft eyes so sweetly, lovingly, and thankfully raised to his, with that gentle confiding smile in them, so inexpressibly dear to his heart!—A sweetness to which he had for years been a stranger seemed to pervade his feelings.

“I wish,” he said—and he stooped his tall head tenderly and anxiously down towards her—“I wish you would let it be as it used to be, Eleanor,—let me lift you up and carry you to your room. You really do not seem fit to walk, and I could lift you as I should a feather. Would it not be better, Lady Wharncliffe?” turning and appealing to her.

“Really I see no objection to it; only she is such a positive little thing. . . . She is as light as a leaf; it really would be much better.”

And thus encouraged, Randal Langford, without waiting for further permission, took the trembling girl up in his arms, and saying, “Mother, which way?” fol-



lowed by the ladies, carried her, as he might have done a little baby, very softly and without the slightest appearance of effort up-stairs. The maid opened the door of the room appointed, a not very large one, at the end of the house. It had a bow-window and commanded a most lovely view to the eastward. The sun, it is true, no longer shone full upon it; but his rays gilded the woods and cliffs opposite, and sparkled upon the river which ran below. The scene was beautiful beyond description.

The cliffs upon this side of the house were less precipitous than upon the other, and fell, broken into all sorts of fantastic shapes, and clothed, with every variety of that beautiful vegetation proper to the sandstone-rock, towards the stream. The rich yellows, reds, and browns of the stone from time to time breaking out, and appearing between the various greens,—now, indeed, now longer properly green, for the dying tints of the year were upon the shrubs and toughest plants which grew there in such profusion. A path upon

this side of the house led from the gravel-walk and terrace down to the river's brink; over which the bow-window, projecting considerably, seemed to hang.

At this moment nothing could be more pleasing than the scene presented through the window; nor look more comfortable and cheerful than did the little apartment itself. Indeed it might be said to be the only really cheerful apartment in the house. She had her arm round his neck, as he held her in his arms, and before he laid her down upon the sofa, which stood by a brisk blazing fire, he just carried her to the window, and leaning her forward so that she might look out, said,

“Look Eleanor,—do you remember this view? The sun is very bright this November day—Is it not beautiful?”

“Lovely!” she answered. “How soft and calm it is! The shrubs seem to have grown very much, and are more rich and abundant than ever. And how charming is the effect of the mist lying in the hollows of the woods and rocks, with the bright tints of the sun tipping the peaks

and the tops of the trees!—Let me look a little longer—how lovely!”

He stood there—not unwilling, you may be sure, leaning her forward, and she placidly regarding the scene—with such an expression of peaceful repose on her face! The peace and repose were infectious. He had never felt in his life before as he did at that moment. Such a sense of almost holy love and joy stealing over him, as he held the sweet delicate creature in his arms, so tenderly! Then she turned up those gentle eyes and said,

“Thank you,—Now you must lay me upon my sofa, I believe.”

And, assisted by her maid, he deposited his burden with a care the most solicitous, and with feelings of tenderness and anxiety most sweet and most new, upon the couch, and aided Mrs. Cary to arrange her pillows and coverings. All which attentions Eleanor seemed to receive with as much satisfaction as they were offered, and a merry little laugh, such a laugh as had not been heard from her lips for many and many a long day rejoiced her mother’s ears.

Lady Wharncliffe came up to the sofa, looking much pleased.

“ Really, my love, you have borne your journey wonderfully. — Thank you, Mr. Langford—Randal ”—

“ Let it be Randal, pray ma’am.”

“ Well then, Randal—really you are a capital nurse. Who would have expected it of *you*?—But you were always very good-natured.—However, now we must turn you out, for positively”—looking at her watch—“ it’s getting late, and Eleanor must lie and rest about an hour before she dresses for dinner.—So get along with you, and *au revoir*, my darling. Cary, take care your young mistress does not get cold from lying between fire and window. Better, perhaps, draw the curtain.”

“ Oh no, mamma, thank you, please not to draw the curtain. Let me look out.”

---

He ran down stairs, and let himself out at the hall-door, and plunged down the steep by the path beneath her window, and was soon upon the flowing river’s

brink. Here, under overhanging trees and rocks, a wide walk was laid out, which extended above two miles, winding in and out,—now following the course of the river, and running upon its very brink, then diverging into the woods, and leaving the water altogether;—now rising amid the cliffs and broken rocks to a considerable height, then sinking again to the shaded river-side. A beautiful walk it was, indeed !

He hurried there ; and once there, forgetful of tide and time, indulging all the new and delightful sensations which crowded into his heart, he followed the devious way, unobservant of the beauteous scenery which surrounded him, yet perhaps not entirely disengaged from its influence.—The sweet solitude of the walk, and its extraordinary beauty, the lulling sound of the light wind among the branches overhead, and of the transparent river, bounding and rippling over the stones and broken rocks, soothing his senses by their soft music, and lending fresh charms, though unobserved, to the harmony of his



feelings. Every harsh or irritating sensation seemed soothed,—every old rankling wound healed. His cherished hatreds, his bitter recollections, all dissipated, as if the past had been but a painful dream. His thoughts were far otherwise occupied, dwelling upon that tender smile, those blue eyes of surpassing softness and loveliness, that delicate form, which seemed to ask for support and protection. Love, tenderness, and a sort of holy pity, were mingling in his bosom,—the sense of injuries and sufferings,—the old thirst for revenge and retribution, died away. It was as a new birth of the soul.

He wandered and wandered on, I know not how long; at last he recollected himself. Then he looked at his watch; it was getting late, and he hurried back to dress for dinner, filled with the delightful certainty that at dinner he must meet again, and that the whole evening would be spent in her company.

---



The change effected in Eleanor's feelings was for the moment almost as entire as that produced in those of Randal, and the relief which she experienced almost as great. She had been for some time very, very miserable, and her misery had been increased to a sad degree by the impossibility of exciting sympathy in any of those who surrounded her. Not that they intended to be unkind; to positive unkindness, except, it might be, now and then from her brother, she was a stranger. Her father, whom she had feared so much as a little girl, had, since she had bloomed forth into loveliness so remarkable, exchanged the mortifying system of early years for one totally different. His pride in the admiration she excited was excessive, and he flattered her accordingly, and indulged her in most ways. Like other vain men, he was gratifying his own self-love, whilst thus appearing to be gratifying hers, and giving, by the admiration he did not hesitate openly to display, the cue, as it were, to the admiration of others. Nobody could, in appearance at least, be more

indulgent than he. Not a wish that she could form was to be denied, not a want unsatisfied. Every one was put in requisition if her service required it. Every one's wants and wishes were expected to be subservient to hers. And yet, under all this apparent kindness, Eleanor felt and knew that she dare no more contradict her father, than in the days of her infant awe! That he loved and indulged her to excess, but that all this was upon one understood condition—that no desire of hers was to be put in contradiction with his. The love and the value he expressed for her was to be understood to last so long, and only so long as she consented to minister to his self-consequence, and yield implicitly to his plans and wishes. As for anything like the true sympathy of the heart—anything approaching to a disinterested desire for her true happiness, or indeed, the least approach to the comprehension of that in which her true happiness would consist—she well knew it was as vain to hope as to expect to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles.

As regarded the mother, that sympathy for which her heart was yearning it seemed almost equally vain to look for. There were, indeed, few feelings in common between mother and daughter.—They were both very good-natured, and habitually gentle and kind in their manner. In these two good qualities, which so agreeably tend to smooth the course of family life, Lady Wharncliffe might be said to rival Eleanor. But in all others, alas! how lamentably she fell short!

Eleanor possessed an almost excessive delicacy of taste, the greatest refinement of sentiment and acuteness of perception, united to a temperament sensitive in the extreme. Her faculties were of a very high character, and her disposition noble, generous, and tempered too finely not to feel in general perfectly indifferent to the busy interests of that little-great world, for which her mother seemed alone to exist. Eleanor knew but of two sources of happiness,—the development of her fine intellect, and the indulgence of the affections belonging to the tenderest of hearts.

Lady Wharncliffe, on her side, was not wanting in a certain cleverness, nor incapable, in her way, of a good deal of real affection. In things belonging to this world, she was active, tolerably well judging, and at home. Of those belonging to a higher life—that life which constituted existence for Eleanor—she had not an idea. Anything like the support of her sympathy in those many sufferings to which a being like Eleanor is, in the great world, exposed, it was manifestly absurd to expect from her mother.

Yet was Lady Wharncliffe far from neglectful of her responsibilities, as she understood them. To bring her daughter out with every advantage—to dress her in the best possible style, without regard either to trouble or expense—carefully to attend to her health, so far, at least, as was consistent with the fatigue of continual dissipation—above all, to leave no pains unspared, no circumstance neglected, which might tend to secure an advantageous settlement in life for her daughter,—this was Lady Wharncliffe's conception of a mother's duties, and

such duties she sedulously performed, and well. Further than this she did not, for she really *could* not, go. She had never known a want beyond such things herself—how should she estimate the immensity of that want in the case of another? Everything approaching to matters of such a nature, was at once dismissed as “stuff and nonsense” by her. And a laugh, and “My dear child, how *can* you be so absurd? Do, for goodness sake, my sweet Eleanor, talk more like a rational being,”—had silenced the first attempts of the young girl, as life opened, to make the feelings understood with which her heart was filled to overflowing. Of course, anything approaching to confidence had been thus entirely repressed, and the feelings had been driven inwards. A being so timid and sensitive as Eleanor Wharncliffe, even under the most favourable circumstances, finds it difficult to give vent to sentiments delicate perhaps to an almost morbid excess,—in this case it was manifestly impossible. She became really in her own family what so many very unreasonably and conceitedly affect to be in



theirs, — that hapless thing, *une femme incomprise*.

She had no sister, and as regarded her brother, there was still less sympathy to be hoped than from any member of her family. He was, in fact, a regular spoiled heir, a common-place fashionable young man of the world, selfish and hard-hearted, as many such, though not all, are. As he had never known crosses himself, he cared not one whit for the crosses of other people, and indeed usually chose to conclude that such things existed only in the imagination of the sufferers. His feelings to his sister unsoftened, as in Sir John and Lady Wharncliffe, by the natural instincts of parental pride and affection, were those of complete indifference, or rather, I might perhaps say, something beyond indifference. In fact, he did not much like her.

There was an innate superiority in Eleanor's mind, character, and abilities, which would make itself felt, in spite of all her gentleness; and which, though he would have scorned to confess it, irritated his pride, and excited something very like



incipient jealousy in Everard. Then, she was an invalid, and as such required consideration and indulgence; and with the something approaching to barbarity, too common in spoiled, selfish men, Everard hated an invalid; voting that nothing upon earth was such a bore as a delicate woman, — “Mere affectation, and nonsense, and fuss, it was all.” “Why could not one woman do what other women did, if she chose?” “Other women stood twelve hours a day at their washing-tubs. Housemaids scrubbed floors, and dairymaids went singing along under heavy milk-pails. The incapacity to endure fatigue was nothing in the world but the result of indolent habits, and fancied inability for exertion.” “He hated such nonsense, and had he a daughter like Eleanor, he’d soon teach her to jump about.”

In this manner Eleanor had for some years been driven to live within herself, until her thoughts and feelings, for want of some wholesome communication with those of others, had attained an almost

morbid intensity ; and she stood in danger of becoming more absorbingly attached than is safe in this inconstant, changeful world, should she meet with an object capable of exciting her affections. Her attachment to her cousin Randal had not taken any form, however, approaching to this. She had been too young when last at Ravenscliffe to attach herself in this exclusive manner to Randal Langford ; and the difference of their ages, so apparent at that early period of life, would have indeed rendered anything like sympathy of this nature improbable.

It was as her protector and champion, rather than as her companion, that she looked up to him and loved him ; and it was indeed something in the very same light that she felt inclined to regard him still, for she was in circumstances greatly to need both a friend and a protector. Poor girl ! she was at this time sorely beset ; and she had no one, as we have seen, among the members of her own family, from whom she might expect the least assistance in her difficulties. The anxious

searching look which she had once or twice cast upon Randal, seemed to be one of inquiry whether he would indeed prove himself a friend, and the examination seemed to have encouraged her. As she lay there upon her sofa, resting before dressing for the evening, her countenance assumed a tranquillity of expression; there was an air of hope and comfort diffused over it which had not been seen upon that gentle suffering face for a very long time.

Lady Wharncliffe, dressed for dinner, now came into the room. She looked extremely handsome, and well satisfied, as she had reason to be, with her own appearance; and she came up to her daughter's couch, and kissing her, said,

“How well you are looking, my dear! this air seems quite to have renovated you already. You will enjoy yourself here, I am sure—you, who are so fond of old childish associations, and all that sort of thing—and, really, it looks a pretty place—I had almost forgotten all about it—Most horribly out of the way, though, it certainly is. How well Mr. and Mrs. Langford

are looking! Not a day older, I declare, than when I was here last. I suppose, in the vegetable sort of life they lead here, people really become something like the old oak-trees themselves. Year succeeds to year with *them*, and makes no perceptible change. As for Randal Langford, your cousin, child, what do you think of him? A strange, dark-looking face it is. And yet, I declare, he is grown handsome—*very* handsome, I think. I can't help liking those sort of faces—don't you? They look so manly."

"I always thought my cousin Randal handsome from a boy," said Eleanor; "and though people used to say, even then, that there was too much harshness in his expression, it always seemed a kind one to me. And I think I can detect the same latent kindness in it now."

"You have been perusing the book with attention, have you, my darling little prude?—I am glad you like the contents so well.—It's so nice to be fond of one's cousin."

"Fond!" repeated Eleanor, "And yet,

I believe I really am quite fond of Randal. I always liked him so much from a boy ; and he seems to me—except, of course, that he is grown and changed into a man—so little altered. As he carried me upstairs, I could almost have fancied I was but six years old again.”

“Dear me, child ! I wish I could fancy myself six years old again ! But I must wait for young gentlemen to volunteer to carry me up-stairs, before I can arrive at that blessed delusion. However, seriously, I am quite pleased that you are so content ; and I hope that old associations may put more recent ones out of that silly little heart of yours, Eleanor. . . . Say it shall be so, child—won’t you ?”

Eleanor sighed ; then she said, “If my mind could be at rest upon one subject, I should be able to get along better.”

“Well, well ; I think you may make yourself easy upon that score for the present. It is not likely Sir William will renew his suit just yet.—Though I don’t intend to say that I think he will not persevere—That chit’s face of yours must



have something very attractive in it. But, make yourself easy ; you will not see him again, at all events, till next spring. Let me see—Easter falls late—one, two, three, four, five, good months. Why, it is a life, child ! Nobody knows what may turn up in five months.”

Eleanor looked relieved by this speech. Five months was, indeed, a long time. No one could tell, as her mother said, what might happen in five months. The best thing that could happen, as regarded her, would be, that Sir William might change his mind, fall in love elsewhere, and leave her at peace.

She dreaded a family contest. She felt that resistance to the united wishes and persuasions of all around her was a task to which she was scarcely equal, alone and unsupported as she was : and yet, to marry Sir William !—With her present feelings it was impossible. But, what could she urge ? He was an unexceptionable match, — rich, well-born, handsome, and good-humoured—and with just that portion of sense which suffices to



make a man respectable without making him interesting.

She had only one objection to plead, and that she dared not allude to, for shame and mortification lay that way—For there lay the deep shame of passionate, and, as it appeared, unrequited affection bestowed; and to her proud family the burning mortification of having had the daughter of their pride, in the eye of the world—and, to use the terms of the world, neither more nor less than—jilted. It was this hateful, hateful idea which furnished her father and her brother with their strongest reasons for forcing this match with Sir William upon her. Her speedy marriage with another, being, as they regarded it, the only possible way to wipe out the disgrace under which they smarted.

As for Lady Wharncliffe, as we have seen, she had always been properly alive to the importance of a good settlement in life; and since Eleanor had “come out,” as the phrase is, had thought, talked, and speculated upon little else. Therefore to

refuse such a proposal as Sir William's,—unless, indeed, a better offered,—appeared to her little short of insanity.

“You are going to dress, and come down again, this evening?” the mother interrupted Eleanor's reverie by saying.

“Oh, yes—certainly! I feel quite equal to it. You will find me in the drawing-room when you come out from dinner; for though Randal would not let me walk up, I certainly intend to walk down-stairs. So, pray say nothing about my designs of this nature, dear mamma, for fear he should insist upon having it his own way again.”

“Oh, never fear, child; I'll keep your secret.—But there's the second bell. Why *can't* these people have a gong? They seem to retain most antediluvian notions, to be sure,—of which dining at six o'clock is not the least. Six o'clock!—only think! However, farewell, dear child; and put on that white silk with the white fringes, will you? It becomes you so—And I want to force that starched piece of puritanism, Mrs. Langford, to own

you are very pretty, which she seems to think it almost at the peril of her soul to do.—Besides, it pleases your father—you know it always does, when you look ravishing.” And so the gay mother kissed the quiet daughter, and took her leave.

---

The evening was rather a stupid affair to most of the party. Lady Wharncliffe sat making talk with Mrs. Langford, and every now and then endeavouring to swallow down, as best she might, some most tremendous yawns. The two gentlemen got on, however, somewhat better together. Men in England, however different their habits of thought and ideas of life may be, are sure to find some subjects in common upon which to discourse; and, moreover, are seldom so exposed to the inroads of the demon of *ennui* as a lively woman like Lady Wharncliffe, when there is nothing amusing going on.

“How *shall* I ever get through it? How *shall* I ever endure it?—What am I to do?—What *is* to become of me?” she kept mentally ejaculating; but then she looked at the sofa, and she said to herself, “Possible or impossible, do it I must.”

Upon the sofa Eleanor lay reposing; and over the back of it Randal was again leaning. The young girl was certainly looking surpassingly lovely; for *that*, rather than beautiful, is the proper term to use. The white dress that she wore, trimmed with rows of rich fringe; the beautiful lace scarf, or shawl, that hung over her shoulders; her most sweet face, her abundance of fine fair hair, now dressed and displayed to the utmost advantage; the peculiar softness of every tone when she spoke; the sweetness of her smile; the tender grace of every motion and gesture, rendered her, in truth, a most bewitching creature. The young man sat there talking to her, and listening to the sweet easy way in which she prattled—that pretty prattle, so gentle, so softly playful,

so winning, to his sense little short of ravishment—He thought her the sweetest of mortals—more than mortal—an angel—an angel of light and beauty.

His whole strong nature was melted and subdued. The stronger the power of resistance, the more complete the victory. He felt already that he loved this fair creature with that love, too deep for words, which passeth show—that his whole, whole heart was hers—hers every faculty of his mind—hers henceforward and for ever. The strength of the passion was in proportion to the earnest intensity of his character.

He loved her as the strong, the serious love, when love they do with the whole soul. Yet his passion took a colour from the object by which it was inspired. It was as pure and holy, as deep and fervent. Already he felt himself a nobler and a better man. And, as he looked at Eleanor, his imagination began to weave one of those romances of marriage, which adds a something so substantial, so dear, to more evanescent feelings. Already he was



picturing her to himself as his wife, his own—the mistress of his family—the mother of his children—the gentle ruler of that very mansion.—Investing her with those sweet attributes which rendered her still more precious as his own, his own only, a part and portion—and oh! what a blessed portion!—of his own individual self!

These are dangerous speculations for any one, man or woman, to indulge in. It is dangerous work thus to abandon the reins to the imagination, and draw pictures of felicity, only too often, never to be realized. A few hours leads people far, when they once begin to travel in that direction. The effects produced by that one evening followed Randal Langford to his grave. Love and hatred were both master passions with him. Though so strongly contrasted, it is, as asserted in the old proverb—the power to feel them in their full intensity mostly exists in the same character.

The conversation of the elder ones had for some time subsided into silence; and



sitting there round the fire, they observed, with considerable satisfaction, what was going on between Randal and Eleanor—too much absorbed in each other's conversation to be aware that they were objects of attention elsewhere.

Lady Wharncliffe raised her head, from time to time, from her netting, and though she could not suppress a sigh now and then, as she thought of the tasks before her, yet with internal satisfaction she reiterated to herself the determination to endure all with true maternal heroism. Even Mrs. Langford's cold precise mouth, as she looked gravely at the two, relaxed into a grim smile of approbation. Sir John talked of turnips, and cast a glance now and then at what was going on; and Mr. Langford looked gravely content.

The lovely young creature, her heart absorbed with far other ideas, little suspected the nature of the family plot thus weaving against her, or the expectations which her artless conduct excited.

As for Randal, he was, as usual, perfectly careless upon the subject. If he

had suspected what was going on, his pride and his delicacy might have been somewhat offended, and he would probably have resented this sort of premature design against his liberty. Men hate to be dictated to in love, even if it be in the very way to which their inclination is tending.

## CHAPTER VII.

When we met methought her alter'd,  
Though the flower was sweet and fair,  
And the bright bud had expanded,  
But morn's sunshine was not there.  
Oft I mark'd a sudden sadness,  
Stealing o'er her tender eye ;  
Swiftly on her smile and laughter,  
Follow'd the unbidden sigh.

MRS. ACTON TINDAL.

ELEANOR'S health rapidly improved under the quiet of Ravenscliffe. Her mind, harassed and agitated as it had been, was soothed by the tranquillity which surrounded her ; besides, she had abundance of time to herself, and could indulge her melancholy without observation. She was also entirely relieved from what was at this moment the most pressing of her

troubles—the suit of Sir William. By common consent this last subject seemed altogether dropped, and this was a great comfort to her.

She spent much of her time in her charming little room—her eye wandering over the lovely landscape before her—listening to the hoarse roar of the wind among the woods, or watching the hurrying river, now swelled by the autumn rains, tumbling over the rocks. Her thoughts would dwell, it is true, too long upon a certain forbidden subject; but the cruel bitterness of her injured feelings seemed allayed, and her heart soothed and softened by the charm of that repose which surrounded her.

She had time to review what had passed, to arrange her thoughts, to discipline, as far as possible, her feelings—those feelings which had been so deeply outraged,—to endeavour to diminish the force of sentiments through which she had suffered so much,—to stifle cruel, cruel regret,—to forget that trembling agony of hope once excited to ecstasy, and disappointed.

She strove to lower the bright hues of those pictures of bliss once assured, now lost for ever, which, do what she would, at times recurred,—to endeavour to be reasonable and good, resigned, patient, and submissive.

Whilst she had remained at Cheltenham in all the hurry of dissipation, and exposed to the suit of Sir William, and to the cruel persecutions of her family upon his account, she had found it impossible to obtain the least approach to tranquillity of mind. She had lived in a constant state of internal agitation, which, coupled with the incessant and painful effort to disguise it, and assume a composure which she was so far from feeling, had completely undermined her health, and brought her into the fearful state of weakness to which she was reduced.

Eleanor lived many years ago,—when mankind seem to have existed under what might almost be thought a different religious dispensation from that which we now enjoy. There was little of that reality—that vital sense of the loving

truth of the great subject which distinguishes truly religious minds in our time. People seemed to reason upon these subjects most imperfectly,—to admit the facts, with much less hesitation and doubt, perhaps, than they do at present, but not so logically to follow out their consequences, *when* admitted. Either as a restraint or as a consolation, religion was, in general, less effectual, in proportion to the immensity of its claims, than even now. And people who believed every article of its teachings, and were punctual in the observance of its external practices, carried little of it home to their inner hearts. They looked to the world for their motives and for their support; and disciplined their hearts, when that task was attempted, rather by the suggestions of that sort of ancient moral philosophy Christianized, which you may find in the sermons of Blair,—for instance,—than through that vital faith which purges the eye of the soul, teaches to discern the force of higher motives, and gives strength to move mountains.



Thus it was both with Eleanor and Randal. They both, contrasted as were their notions, were alike in this—their habitual respect for religion, their habitual confidence in the truth of what they had been taught, and their equally habitual inconsistency in neglecting to apply these things to the discipline or support of their own minds.

They differed, however, so far, that whilst Eleanor, with a strong intuitive moral sense, a very deep perception of the beauty of goodness, was in a dim, groping manner always endeavouring to attain to it, Randal knew not what self-discipline meant.

Eleanor was an example of what a character, so naturally lovely as hers, may become, and often, I believe, does become under such superficial views. There was all that is tender, pure, and beautiful, but there was neither happiness nor strength.

The cheering, animating sense of living under the perpetual government of wisdom, goodness, and sympathy—that bro-

therhood with One who has condescended to disclose himself under the affecting relationship,—that cheerful submission which arises from the conviction, that suffering, and sorrow, and disappointment, are not the result of the contradictory workings of blind accident, but parts of a great scheme of moral education,—such consoling and ennobling certainties were seldom present to her mind. So that in this great crisis of her life, when such considerations, and such considerations alone, could have saved her from the sense of utter desolation and desertion which she endured, left to her own unassisted efforts, she added one more to the numerous list of sufferers, who have found the vanity of the supports on which they trusted.

Still, nothing that is good in itself is in this world utterly cast away ; and the efforts she made to resign herself to necessity were not without their fruit. She struggled hard to recover her peace of mind, and though unable altogether to attain this, she was able to conquer the

constant internal agitation which had been destroying her, and to profit by this pause in her life, so as to restore a little order to the confusion of her thoughts and feelings.

She passed the numerous hours in which at Ravenscliffe she was suffered to remain alone, in reviewing her past life, endeavouring to understand her own character, and to decide upon the course best, under all the circumstances of the case, to pursue.

Upon two things she soon came to a decision. One was, that whilst under the influence of her present feelings, the only state in which she could either perform her duty to her own satisfaction, or, indeed, find existence supportable, was that of a single woman. The second was the natural consequence of the first, that she must, and she would, come what might of it, refuse Sir William, if, as she feared, he should address her again. She likewise resolved, in case of difficulty, to apply to her cousin Randal, confess the whole to him, and entreat his protection and sup-

port against the urgency of her family. There was everything in Randal that she could desire for such a purpose. His affection for her seemed to be as strong as in their childish years; the influence his strength of character gave him over others very great, and more especially great, as it appeared, over her own father and mother. They treated him with a cordiality, and showed a deference to his opinions in a manner that surprised her. The cause she was, indeed, far from divining.

It may seem strange, but so it was,—so absorbed was she by her own ideas, that the thought of her cousin in the character of a lover did not once present itself.

And thus gradually and almost imperceptibly, Eleanor day by day recovered her strength, and a certain internal tranquillity. Having made up her mind as to the future, a certain tender melancholy succeeded to the cruel tempest by which her poor heart had been distracted. Life appeared under a sobered, but no longer a terrific aspect; and her face losing a certain anguished expression of fear and sorrow, was now

only gently shaded by a sweet sadness. Every hour she looked lovelier and more bewitching as these changes proceeded.

Randal, in the meantime, was rapidly advancing in his love history. Every day added something to the captivations of the day before; and every day he became more deeply and passionately attached. His love was, as were his other sentiments, intense and concentrated;—rarely displayed, and in its display often unamiable; embittered by many hard, angry, and mistaken feelings, yet sincere, deep, and most faithful. There was little imagination in it—it was all pure, intense feeling.

The extreme softness of Eleanor's manner spared him many of those alternations of hope and fear, love and rage, which a temper such as his would have been exposed to, under captivity to almost any other woman. She was so gentle and affectionate in her manner of treating him, it was impossible to find cause for offence or irritation; still there was a something, he knew not what, and never



asked himself what, ever seeming to prevent his entire satisfaction. When he was with her, when under the charm of her presence, he felt himself in general content, and but too intensely happy. Yet he rarely left her without a notion that something, he knew not what, had been wanting,—something he missed instinctively, — something he felt intuitively should have been there. She was *too* friendly,—too gently and invariably kind. Could he be complaining of that?

She soon got so much better, that she was able to walk out. First they walked together upon the terrace at the top of the cliff, and in front of the drawing-room windows; then their strolls would extend to the raven's oak, and under its wide stretching branches, and sheltered by the old tower from the east wind, they would walk and converse for hours. At last she ventured to descend by the winding-path which led to the river's side, and enjoy the charming path which I have described, and which the green shining hollies, and the pines and firs intermixed among the



now leafless branches of the other trees, rendered, even in winter, sheltered and beautiful.

He would, upon these occasions, be sometimes gloomy and silent, at others easy and conversable; his temper, now irritable and exacting, then tender and obliging. She had been accustomed to these alternations in his humour when a boy, and thought nothing further of it. When he was cross, she smiled and spoke the more sweetly and playfully, endeavouring to charm the ill-humour out of him; when he was in a better temper, she talked to him confidingly, and was happy and contented. Still neither of them had made the least approach to the subject which severally occupied both their minds. A sort of proud shyness kept him from the least allusion, as yet, to his passion; and she shrouded the secret history of her heart with the most shrinking delicacy.

So they continued entirely in the dark as to the real nature of each other's sentiments; but there was so much old honest affection between them, that they

got on upon the whole extremely well in spite of this.

They have been walking by the side of the river for two hours at least, for it is a shining, sunny day; there has been a slight frost in the morning, just enough to crisp and render the air exhilarating, and the sun is warm and bright.

A silence longer than common—though long silences were not unfrequent between them—has been for some time maintained; her thoughts have been wandering far away,—farther than she had lately suffered them to roam. She has been thinking of the days of the preceding summer,—of certain walks under over-arching trees, and by gently gliding rivers, at the recollection of which her heart trembled,—of certain words, and looks, and impressive sighs,—of a charmingly animated face, full of bright intelligence,—of the sweetest, and gayest, and tenderest smiles,—of feelings too sweet for words, never to be forgotten; and she sighed and started as Randal turned abruptly round, saying,—

“What *are* you thinking of, Eleanor?”

She coloured as if she had been detected doing some forbidden thing.

“Thinking of?” she said.

“Yes, thinking of—I have been watching you this quarter of an hour.—I never saw such a face as yours is, Eleanor. It can take, at times, the saddest, most piteous expression that it is possible to conceive. It is a perfect tragedy in itself. What *can* make you look so?”

“I did not know,” blushing and trying to laugh it off, “that my face was such a story-teller.”

“What do you mean by that? You don’t look sincere, Eleanor, whilst you say that. I wish I knew the cause of all this.”

“All this! What do you mean by all this? All nothing.—Nonsense, Randal—what were we talking about?”

“Nay, what *were* we talking about, Eleanor? Nothing at all for this last half-hour, I am certain.—I would give something to know what you have been *thinking* of.”

“Don’t, Randal. There is nothing so disagreeable as to be asked to tell one’s

thoughts—In nearly nine cases out of a hundred not worth the telling. I have observed this even when the face has looked as serious as if it were resolving the fate of the nation.”

But he was not to be so put off. He felt certain there was evasion.

“ Eleanor, when you were a little child, you used to be a very cowardly child. Cowards are seldom truthful.”

She did not flame up, as many girls would have done, at this blunt accusation. That was not her way. She merely cast down her eyes, and seemed to consider whether it was deserved.

After a little reflection, she answered, gently :

“ I believe it is a fault to which cowardice is very prone.”

“ But why should you be afraid of me ? You used never to be afraid of me.”

“ I am not afraid of you.—What makes you think so ?”

“ Because I am certain you told me a story just now.”

“ No, Randal, I do not think I did.

And besides, you have no right to inquire into the subject-matter of my thoughts, if I do not choose to tell you."

"True.—Then you confess there *was* a subject matter which you did not choose to tell me?"

"No, I did not confess even so much as that.—Pray do not tease me;" and she looked distressed.

"That means, Ask me no questions, and I will tell you no lies.—Eh, Eleanor?"

"Randal, you are not kind this morning."

"I see nothing very unkind in what I have said; but if I am not kind, you are neither sincere nor candid."

The tears came to her eyes; but she made no answer.

"Eleanor, there is a mystery about you," he said, passionately; "and I must and will know it."

She made no answer.

"Eleanor," he said, taking hold rather roughly of her arm, "everything about you convinces me more and more that there is a mystery; and I *must* know it."

“No, Randal,” she said, gently and firmly, “I do not acknowledge anything of the sort; but if there were something to confess,—a mystery, as you call it,—this is not the way to get it out of me. It is new to me to find you rude and ungentle; but I think everybody seems to take a pleasure in treating me in the wrong way. They might get anything out of me by softness . . . . Perhaps it is better as it is.”

“Might they get anything out of you by softness?” he cried, greatly touched by her manner. “Oh! Eleanor, that I could be soft; but I cannot be soft. Oh! that I could get anything from you by softness. I mean—that—that—think—oh, Eleanor!”

“Pray, Randal, don’t talk in that way,” she said, turning from him, and for the first time with a vague feeling of alarm. “Oh! Randal,” and she turned to him again, with the most beseeching look,—“be my *friend*!”

“And am I not your friend? Would I not be your friend? Will I not be your friend?”



"I have ever thought so."

"But, Eleanor,—nay, don't go away; I have something more to say to you."

"Which I cannot, cannot hear now," cried she,—breaking away from him, and hurrying towards the house.

He did not attempt to follow her. He stood looking after her, half hurt, half melted. Her softness was invincible; but something in her manner most discouraging.

---

"And now, my dear Eleanor; be reasonable—don't cry so—what will you keep crying so for? It is so weak, so tiresome. Do, for goodness' sake, have done crying."

She was actually dissolved in tears; but she tried at this to check them, and control her emotion. It would not do; at every fresh rising of thought the tears burst forth, and streamed afresh.

"It really is so provoking;" continued the mother, half-vexed at her, yet very sorry for her—the more vexed because she

was so sorry. "So provoking of you Eleanor, just to take as the greatest of misfortunes, what with your tastes and feelings must be the nicest thing that could possibly have happened to you. You love the country—here is the country. You love a quiet life—here is a quiet life. You love an ancient family—here is an ancient family. You need a good fortune—here is a good fortune. You love your cousin—here is your cousin."

"Ah! no—no. Don't say so, mamma! Don't say so."

"Why really, Eleanor, you are enough to provoke a saint. Why, what can you mean? If you don't like Randal, pray what has been the reason you have voluntarily spent almost the whole of your time with him since we have been here?"

"Oh mamma! Do pray—pray understand me. I esteem and like Randal, but love!—Oh mamma, mamma, you know I cannot, I cannot."

"Don't talk in that way, Eleanor, or you will make me angry. I know! I know nothing, but that if your heart is

not at your own disposal by this time, it is a very great reproach to you."

"Don't be angry. Pray mamma, don't be angry! I have done everything in my power, indeed, I have. My heart is disengaged, is my own again, but oh! oh! do not—do not ask me to love another man."

"I don't ask you to love another man; I should never dream, or think, of asking any young woman to *love* anybody. It is her first duty, in my opinion, to keep her heart a stranger to such weakness. The first point of self-respect, of delicacy of womanly deportment, of all that a young woman ought to regard in herself, is to keep her imagination free from such degrading nonsense."

"Oh mamma! mamma! Don't! Have pity!"

"I have neither pity nor patience for you, Eleanor; indeed, I haven't. But I don't want to vex you. Only really—you ought to consider.—Is your whole life to be sacrificed to this most unfortunate prepossession? For I will not give it a

stronger name. That unworthy prepossession I might call it—for what woman gives her heart undemanded, if give her heart, or stuff of that sort, she must.”

“ I know—I know ;” sobbed Eleanor ;  
“ I know—I know how it must seem. I am—I am—sorry—but—but ——”

The mother and daughter were sitting by the fire in Eleanor’s room. The mother on a small chair with her feet upon the fender ; the daughter thrown back in an arm-chair, with her handkerchief held by both hands to her eyes.

“ *Wrong !* To be sure it was, and this is the truth. Either he made love to you, or he did not make love to you. If he did not make love to you, you are perfectly unjustifiable in caring for him ; if he did make love to you, he behaved shamefully ill, and you ought to have discarded him from your thoughts long ago upon that account. But, really, now you know that he is upon the eve—or, in all probability, actually at this moment, married to an-

other. You really ought to behave better—really you *ought*, Eleanor.”

The sobs had ceased, and the tears seemed to have ceased with them. The mother continued to urge her point.

“And now, here is your cousin, Randal—He loves you—he offers you his hand. If you were to search through England you would not suit yourself better; and yet, you actually think of refusing him; for the sake of what? Of what, Eleanor? Be reasonable—only consider—for the sake of a man who has behaved to you shamefully—I repeat it, scandalously ——”

“Spare me mother!” was uttered faintly.

“No, I really cannot spare you, Eleanor; I speak for your own good, dear child. Do pray take your handkerchief from your eyes. Your objections to Sir William I could understand, though I regretted them—but I am positive you like Randal Langford very much, if you were not too silly and romantic to own it.”

“As a friend—Yes, as a friend. But

more!—Oh! not more! I could not deceive him in this way—I could never love him—I should loathe him as a husband—Oh! mother!—mother! Be merciful, and understand me.”

“I cannot understand you—I don’t pretend to understand such stuff. I don’t suppose many women are in love, as you call it, with the men they marry, and much better they should not. Do you think I was? I never dreamed of such a thing—nobody expected such a romance. And now, my dear one,—indeed I am speaking for your own sake,—you really must make up your mind to say Yes, for I am sure your father would never listen for an instant to your saying No. He has made up his mind to this match—and in truth, he had settled it with Mr. Langford before you and Randal met.”

Eleanor was silent.

“Come, speak, Nelly,—do,” said the mother coaxingly, “Speak, my own Nell—don’t be naughty. Dear child! don’t you see that it would never do—that the thing is all fixed and settled between the two



seniors—that Randal is more desperately in love than ever I verily believe happened before in a pre-arranged case of this nature, and we all know what friends you are—so that really, a refusal upon your part would appear so strange, that it could only be accounted for by pleading a previous attachment—and that, you know, it would drive your father raging mad only to hear mentioned.”

“I wonder Randal did not speak to me first.”

“Why, that is what he fully intended doing; but he let out a hint to me of his intentions, and I begged he would speak at once to your father or to myself on the pretence that your health was in such a state that you could not bear any sudden emotion. He most unwillingly consented. I could not trust your first impulses, Eleanor—I did not know what they might lead you to say or do.”

Eleanor, who had leaned forward earnestly at the beginning of this speech, again sank back and covered her face—she groaned slightly.

“My dear girl! do not, for goodness’ sake, make such a tragedy matter of it. Why, after all, it’s only being married, you know. To speak it out bluntly, you cannot have the man you want—pray be content, like nine hundred and ninety-nine girls out of a thousand, to take the man that wants you.”

Eleanor took the handkerchief from her eyes, and looked up into her mother’s face.

“Mother, do not urge me; I will not wrong Randal Langford. I do not love him as a woman ought to love the man she marries. Do not, mother! If this marriage were to take place—which, please God, it never, never shall—it would be a miserable one.”

“You cannot be so mad; don’t talk in this way. Nonsense! Wrong Randal by just doing what he so earnestly begs of you to do! Indeed, Eleanor, your notions are perfectly insane; I don’t know what to do with you. I declare I shall be obliged to apply to your father and brother to bring you to your senses.”

“Mamma!—mamma!—mamma!”

“ Oh ! dear, dear love, do not bleat forth that name in such a piteous manner, like a poor lost lamb. No, no ; if you will only be reasonable . . . I would not haste or hurry you for the world, Eleanor,—and you will be quite ill, I declare. No, I will promise to say nothing as yet to bring your father upon you, upon one condition, however—”

“ What is that, mamma ? any—everything.”

“ Promise, then, that you will faithfully attend to my advice in one single respect, and I will not say a word to your father about your state of mind.”

“ I promise—What is it ? ”

“ That you will keep this distressing secret from Randal Langford. You have promised, Eleanor, you must keep your word.”

“ Ah, mother ! you have betrayed me into promising that which I had no right to promise . . . Release me from that promise, mother, I beseech you.”

“ No, I shall do no such thing. Nothing but misery and mischief can in any case arise from your breaking it. In the pre-

sent state of Randal's mind, if he knew that history, I do not know what he might not do. Randal is capable of anything when enraged, and his resentments are terrible. I do not know what he might do if he heard this story; what revenge he might take upon Lord Lisburn, in the first place,—or what upon your father, and his own father, in the second,—for deceiving him and drawing him into this trap. Your father, most especially, Eleanor, whose conduct, though meant for the best, was not quite loyal and above board, perhaps. You can have no idea of the mischief you might do, and for no possible good on earth—for the thing is over for ever, and what can be the use of recurring to it? However, use or not, I have your promise, Eleanor, and you will not break it."

"I cannot break it; but—well, it is no matter, I must speak to Randal, myself."

"Why, I suppose in due time," said the mother, laughing, "you must speak to Randal yourself." Oh! how that laugh, slight as it was, grated upon the poor girl's nerves. "But I cannot possibly, Eleanor,

allow of an interview with Randal till you have given your consent to be his. Indeed I can't, child; it would only be to draw you into terrible temptation. I know, in the present state of your nerves, you could not possibly help saying or doing something which ought not to be done or said. No, you cannot, shall not, see Randal till you have had time to get over this foolish flurry, and to become reasonable; as I am quite sure you will when you have reflected a little. So—La! there is the dressing bell, I declare—I must go and dress; I shall say you have a bad headache, and beg to be excused coming down to-night; so you will be left here quite undisturbed, to think of what I have said. And as soon as we come out of the dining-room I will be with you again.”

“Come,” she added, going up to the chair, and taking the pale and tear-stained face of her daughter between both hands, she kissed her on the forehead, “my dear, dear child, don't put yourself into such an agitation; don't fret yourself to death. You look quite ill, indeed you do, Eleanor.



I will send Cary with your draughts. I wish to heaven you would not make yourself so unhappy, it makes one so very uncomfortable; pray let me find you better when I come up again. And what will you have for dinner?—There are snipes; I know you can fancy a snipe.”

Eleanor shook her head.

“Oh! now don’t begin to imagine you can’t eat, or there’ll be an end of you. It *is* quite fancy—you had a very good appetite yesterday. Well, well, I shall send you something up; and mind, I shall be quite in a passion if I do not find it devoured—but I really must go. Do wash your eyes with a little rose-water, they are quite inflamed.”

And again taking the pale, downcast face between her hands, she lifted it up, gave her daughter a loving kiss, and went away, as utterly callous to her child’s sufferings as she was utterly incapable of comprehending them.

And this it is to have a good-natured, worldly woman for a mother. One who is without understanding.



## CHAPTER VIII.

Oh Death! no more, no more delay,  
My spirit longs to flee away,  
And be at rest——

LONGFELLOW.

ELEANOR was left alone, still in the same attitude. Thrown back in her chair, and her eyes covered with her handkerchief—but as soon as the door closed upon her mother, she rose from her seat, and wringing her hands, began to pace up and down the room in the extremity of distress.

It was the agony of despair.

Her soft eyes, in a sort of wild distraction, were cast up towards the ceiling, as if imploring the help she could not hope from man; her beautiful fair hair

had fallen from the comb that fastened it, and streamed floating behind her; her fingers were convulsively twisted together, and her arms rigidly extended before her. Thus she kept walking up and down, breathing hard, and looking as one bewildered by the ecstasy of suffering.

Terrible situation for a creature so timid, of a nature so gentle and yielding, to find herself thus called upon, alone and unsupported, to encounter the fierce struggle she anticipated with her family, and not one friend on earth to council or support her; for Randal — Randal — ah! that was the worst of all—was in league with her enemies. She kept walking hurriedly up and down the room, in a paroxysm of distress, unable to calm her spirits, or even think; all was a wild storm and confusion of terror and anguish, increased by that frightful agitation of the nerves which renders resistance impossible.

Ay, there it was, altogether, all against her! And Randal—Randal Langford!—her friend, her brother!—he, upon whom her poor heart had lately reposed in such

confidence, assured of his support and affection—even he!—Where should she fly now? Randal, her friend—He, too, was become a persecutor—a lover!

A lover seemed to her tortured feelings but another name for the cruellest of enemies. A suitor was to her imagination one only bent upon securing his own happiness at the expense of hers, at the expense of—oh! what a sum of misery—something more hateful, more to be dreaded, than death itself. Death—yes, there was death; Why might she not die, and escape from this cruel world at once, and find rest in the bosom of the All-pitying.—But, ah!

“Is there no pity sitting in the skies  
Which looks into the bottom of my grief?”

exclaimed the unhappy Juliet, in her despair.

Poor Eleanor cast up those imploring eyes of hers in vain. The need was so near, so urgent, the help seemed so distant, so far off. Thus it will too often prove in the days of distress to those who have not cultivated their higher relations in those of peace and tranquillity. When the

terrible hour arrives, there is no help to be found on earth—no refuge to be found but in the mercy of Him, the Author of their being. Oh, He seems so far off, and their affliction so near !

“Oh, Heaven ! oh, Heaven ! have pity upon me, for indeed I am sore beset, and my best friend is become my direst enemy, and it goes sorely—sorely with me.”

Then she cast herself again in the large chair, fell back, and once more passed her handkerchief before her eyes ; and as she did so, as a dream of sonnambulism, the charming figure of Lord Lisburn rose before her. The sweet animated face, the tender yet spirited air, the glances which told of love, ineffable love, which words could not express. The vision seemed to speak, seemed to repeat what he had said when last they had met : ‘Eleanor, trust me. Nor father, nor mother, nor kith, nor kin, nor powers above the world, nor powers below, shall separate me from thee, my Eleanor !—Only be faithful and true.’ And now they said he was actually married, or just

upon the eve of being married to another ! And yet she doubted—she had not the cruel satisfaction of being assured even of that. Oh, he was far, far away in that remote corner of Ireland, and she had no means of verifying the tale which had reached her.

She only knew, alas ! that Lord Lisburn was poor, and that she was almost portionless, and that she they spoke of as her rival possessed a fine estate contiguous to his father's, the possession of which would restore his ancient but now ruined house to its original splendour. A splendour which had been lost amid the distractions of his country. She knew that his family had lost much, almost everything, in the cause of their religion and their party, and that the means were in this manner offered of re-establishing their affairs. She was informed, too, that his father and his mother were urging him in the most earnest and affecting manner to the step upon which so much depended, and that her love and his love was all that could be pleaded on the opposite side.

She had been generous. She thought she knew her duty and had endeavoured to do it, but when she discovered that Lisburn personally disliked the young heiress to whom his friends so passionately desired to unite him, she had hesitated. It seemed not right, either to the young lady or to himself, to endeavour to force him by her resistance to a step which, with a character like his, seemed fraught with misery to both parties. Her own character was far from being of that strong energetic stamp which can persist in spite of difficulty in a course once adopted. She was of too soft and yielding a temper—the tears and entreaties of her lover were irresistible.

They had continued to meet in public. In large parties it is true, but where indeed the understanding between them could be easily carried on, and many an opportunity for private conversation be enjoyed; as where better? She had allowed this; she loved him too well, he had seemed to love her too well, for a final rupture to be possible. They had agreed to wait in patience and mutual



faith, for better times. So it had gone on. At last one morning, suddenly she was aroused from her fond dream of love and happiness by the entrance of her mother. She came into her room before she was up, big with the intelligence that Lord Lisburn had left Cheltenham. The Wharncliffes, it appears, had been absent from the place upon a visit of a few days ; and therefore were, till that moment, entirely in ignorance of Lord Lisburn's departure ; which had taken place about a week before their return. Lady Wharncliffe appeared much excited. She held a newspaper in her hand, and pointed to the following paragraph:

“ We are authorised to announce that the approaching marriage of the accomplished heiress of Castle Vernor, in the county of Kerry, with Lord Lisburn, only son of the Earl of Fermanagh, will shortly take place. The union of the sole living representatives of these two very ancient Catholic families, and consequently of the two contiguous estates under one head, is looked upon with the greatest satisfaction by all those

who take interest in the advancement or security of that ancient and long-oppressed body, whose prosperity may be considered as but a type of the prosperity of the kingdom in general," &c., &c.

It was an Irish paper, in the Catholic interest, which had come into Lady Wharncliffe's hand, and in rather a strange manner. It had been forwarded to her from some unknown quarter, and had just been received by that morning's post.

Lady Wharncliffe was almost wild with indignation. Too much excited, and far too angry to consider her daughter's present feelings, and thus she run on :

"Neither your father nor I liked the connection—you know we never did—nor was it likely we should. An Irish peer he will be; but what is that? What is the miserable Irish peerage, after all?—A host of beggars! Most of them utterly ruined in their horrid rebellion, and these people quite beggared. Still I don't say, that it was a thing we had determined to set our faces against; for he was a fine young man, undoubtedly; and the family

ancient and respectable ; but to have you treated in this way, after all the public attention he has showed you upon every occasion, and that all the world must have seen and commented upon—publicly to expose you to the mortifying suspicion of having been jilted by him,—really, Eleanor, it is *too* abominable ! But don't look so ghastly pale, for goodness' sake ! Don't let yourself be upset in this way about it. Treat it with spirit. Such disagreeable adventures will happen in life to the best of us. Men are so fickle and selfish. The only thing left for us to do is, to put the best face upon the matter. The world is so horridly ill-natured—has such a wicked enjoyment of other people's mortifications. Your father will expect this proof of courage from you, Eleanor. Don't give way, child ; you must not. Your father and I shall soon find a better *parti* for you than this. . . .

“A beggarly son of a beggarly Irish peer, your father calls him ; and a pitiful Irish fortune-hunter into the bargain—and . . .”

“ Good gracious! good gracious! Eleanor! —Eleanor! — Cary! —Cary! Good heavens!”—ringing the bell violently, and then running to the wash-stand and seizing the water-jug—“ Eleanor! —Eleanor! — Good heavens! — Cary! — Cary! — Sal volatile! —æther! —send for Mr. Green— Send for Mr. Green! —Eleanor, child! — Surely she’s not dead?”

She lay cold as death—white as a sheet—motionless as a corpse, upon the bed where she had fallen.

Long, long was it before she came to herself, or showed the slightest sign of returning life; and then it was to open her eyes, cast a piteous glance at her mother, and go off from convulsion fit to convulsion fit. The dreadful paroxysm lasted all that day and night.

The next morning found her restored to sense and the recollection of what had happened; lying in her bed, scarcely half alive, unable to speak but in a whisper, yet in a state of mental agony at the remembrance of which she still shuddered.

From that time to this she had heard no

more of Lord Lisburn, with one exception only, and this was, that some little time afterwards a second Irish newspaper had been forwarded to Lady Wharncliffe, containing the intelligence, that the expected marriage between the amiable and accomplished heiress of Castle Vernon and the distinguished patriot, Lord Lisburn, only son of the Earl of Fermanagh, &c., was fixed for the 20th of the succeeding August.

The 20th of the succeeding August had now long been over, but no further intelligence had reached Lady Wharncliffe. Still, as not a line or syllable in contradiction of these reports had ever come to Eleanor's hands,—as Lord Lisburn had not given her the slightest sign of his existence since they had last met at a large pic-nic party in the neighbourhood of Cheltenham,—Sir John and Lady Wharncliffe seemed justified in considering the affair as at an end, and their daughter as excessively ill-used. And as nothing can be much more mortifying in the eyes of people of the world, than for a daughter to be even suspected of having.



been deserted—herself to jilt one man in order to make a better match with another being quite a different affair—her parents were most impatient to efface the reproach by having her speedily engaged elsewhere. Therefore, Sir William Stanhope's proposals, which speedily followed the late events, had proved most acceptable, and his addresses been encouraged in every possible way. Eleanor, however, showed such utter abhorrence of the idea of any fresh connection, and her health was at present so extremely shattered, that upon Mr. Langford's invitation arriving, accompanied by a very intelligible hint that a union between the two cousins would be, in his opinion, an extremely eligible arrangement, Sir John and Lady Wharncliffe had agreed to leave Cheltenham immediately, and travel northward. Professedly to visit their own country seat, but intending to take Ravenscliffe in their way, in order to bring a plan so agreeable to the seniors of both sides to bear, if possible.

We have seen how the two young people most undesignedly fell into the snare that



was laid for them. How Eleanor's heart, in its desolation, had turned fondly to her cousin, as the friend and companion of her early years, and how Randal's, embittered as it had been, had expanded to the sweet influences of her affection and gentleness. But now, alas! what is to become of them?

Whilst she, at this moment, lies buried in her chair, her eyes covered with her handkerchief, perfectly steeped in tears,—her heart, in its agony, vainly calling upon one lost to her for ever, and shrinking in abhorrence from the idea of that other, on whom, but a few hours before, she clung as to her dearest comfort and aid; he, in an ecstasy of joy and hope, which he finds it perfectly impossible for the present to control, so new is the feeling to him, has taken refuge in the depths of the woods, endeavouring in vain to restrain the wild raptures of his heart.

“When the Lord turned again the captivity of Jacob, we were like them that dream.” They are most like a dream, those wild transports of unexpected joy—

joy, a strange guest to many a human heart. For him, he might have been said never before to have known joy ; his nature had not been genial enough for common joy, but now it overpowered him—overwhelmed him. It seemed more than could be endured. His heart was bursting with it,—transports too sacred for human eye, too wild to be repressed. Eleanor loved him ! Yes, Eleanor loved him, and Eleanor will be his !

Oh ! yes, she loved him—him !—him !—unamiable, unworthy ! He had her mother's word for it. O incredible, but rapturous assurance ! She had loved him from a child—ever loved him—never had loved another ! This last, to a soul jealous as was his, was the crowning, the one all-surpassing bliss.

The universal satisfaction,—the cordial congratulations from the parents upon both sides,—the evident gratification felt by his father,—the friendly assurances of Sir John,—his mother's grave approval, and Lady Wharncliffe's hearty, undisguised delight,—were all additions to his happi-

ness, and seemed to fill up the measure of it. But what was all this to the rapturous assurance which again and again his heart repeated, that Eleanor—Eleanor Wharncliffe, the adored, the idolised,—that gifted creature, so adorned with every mental and personal gift, so gentle, so intelligent, so refined, so surpassingly lovely,—loved him—him!

From that moment, a great change took place in the character of Randal Langford; that transmutation of the man took place, which fervent love, intense grief, or overwhelming disappointment, seem alone capable of producing, and are probably sent to produce. The evil and malignant passions which he had cherished towards one individual,—the harsh and unamiable tempers which he had indulged towards mankind in general,—the resentment he had nourished against his parents,—all melted away, all seemed lost in the glow of love which diffused itself over every feeling. Oh! love is a noble, holy, heavenly thing, when it is fervent, pure, and true. We must pity Randal. Cruel

it is for such love to exist in such a nature, and that love to be in vain.

Lady Wharncliffe, however, was far from sharing in the confidence she had inspired. She was tormented by apprehension lest Eleanor should betray her secret, and upon the rack of invention to devise precautions for obviating so fatal an occurrence. She had therefore determined no meeting should take place between the lovers till the poor girl had first time to recover herself, and had acquiesced in her mother's reasoning. She had therefore warned Randal to check his impatience for an interview, pleading, that in the present extremely delicate state of her daughter's nerves, she required the greatest care, and that she must be kept perfectly quiet till the natural hurry of the spirits upon such an occasion had in some degree subsided.

He had submitted with no very good grace, and had gone out, as we have seen, to seek shelter in the woods, and there recover his own composure before meeting Eleanor at dinner—where, of course, he concluded she would appear. He came

into the drawing-room very late, for he had a dread of sitting there expecting her to come down, and exposed to the eyes of the rest of the party. He thought it would be less exciting to find her already seated upon her sofa by the fire, as he intended, upon his entrance, to steal round to his old place at the back of it. But Eleanor was not there.

He started, and changed colour, and could not conceal his disappointment as he turned his eyes to Lady Wharncliffe, and seemed to ask for an explanation.

Lady Wharncliffe understood him, rose up, crossed the room, and taking him by the arm, began to whisper :

“ Dear child ! she wanted to come down excessively, but I really would not let her. She is sadly delicate, Randal. You will have to take monstrous care of her. I shall go up immediately dinner is over, and we will get her down in the evening. Only a little return of her palpitations. It is necessary to keep her so quiet. Such affairs as these will agitate young creatures of her age, you know.”



He turned away, and retreated to his place behind the sofa, and folded his arms, and sat there, resting his face upon them, saying not one word, good or bad, to any one.

The rest talked cheerfully away; they were all in excellent spirits. Dinner was now announced. Mr. Langford took out Lady Wharncliffe; Sir John, the mistress of the house. Randal's accustomed partner was wanting, he had to go in alone; but, oh! how his heart was beating. He preserved the same silence throughout dinner, perfectly absorbed by his feelings, and inattentive to the appearance he made. He thought tea would never be announced. It was announced later than usual. When the gentlemen came into the drawing-room, they found only Lady Wharncliffe and Mrs. Langford sitting there. Mrs. Langford stiff and stately, as usual, placed by the fire, and Lady Wharncliffe looking a great deal discomposed, stooping her head down over her netting. He felt his heart suddenly chilled—he thought, with disappointment



only—however, he went up to Lady Wharncliffe, drew a chair by her side, and began to talk.

“You promised me Eleanor should be down to tea?”

“Yes, so I did; but *l’homme propose*, you know. I was obliged to bid her go to bed.”

“But, am I not to see her to-night?”

“My dear Randal, what can it signify, whether you *do* see her or not to-night, that you speak in such a dolorous tone? No, I tell you, you are *not* to see her to-night; I bade her go to bed.”

“But surely one word—one single word——”

“Nonsense of single words! You lovers are so unreasonable. True, one single word could not hurt her—but I know you men. It would be nine thousand and ninety-nine words. No, I left Cary with positive orders to put her to bed.”

“Why what is the matter, Lady Wharncliffe? Don’t hide the truth from me. Is she really ill?”

“Oh, no; only a little over agitated. These attacks must take their course, and she must be kept quiet.”

“But, why is she so agitated? Surely this could not have taken her by surprise? Surely she must have guessed—must have been assured for some time of what she was to me?”

“I assure you she had not the slightest idea of it.”

“Had she not? Then, how—why—you do not deceive yourself, Lady Wharncliffe, what you told me this morning is true—it must be true; and yet”—

“Fiddle! nonsense! What *are* you vexing yourself about? I told you I was certain Eleanor loved you; and so I was, and so I am; but she did not know it herself. She was not likely to find out that the little urchin’s shaft was lying there in her heart, till you helped her to discover it. Girls at that age don’t know themselves, their own feelings, or their own minds; and a serious proposal from the man they have a secret weakness for puts them into such a fluster, that

really one does not know what to do with them. But a good night's rest will allay all these little tremors, and you will see her all you wish to-morrow, Randal."

What was there in this speech that displeased him? Why did he miss in it that something, that accent of truth which persuades and reassures? He had not the least reason in the world to distrust Lady Wharncliffe, or to doubt her assurances. Why did he look and feel dissatisfied? She glanced at him, saw something in his face not altogether right, reflected a little, and then went on:

"Now, one thing you must forgive me for saying, Randal. I do hope you will not frighten my poor girl, by expecting from her demonstrations of attachment which, I am quite positive, she will not give you. She is excessively nervous—has the most shrinking delicacy. Recollect, this is the first affair of the kind she has ever been engaged in—for as to Sir William Stanhope, you know, she hated him, and would never once allow him to plead his cause in person—and I

am sure she will be as wild and shy as a wood nymph—and, moreover, so sensitive is she in her feelings, that ten to one the more she likes you, the less she will be able to show it. But if you take to resenting this, and putting on that gloomy countenance which it pleased you to assume just now, mind my words! you will terrify her out of her senses. And if you know anything of Eleanor, this you certainly know—that there is nothing that could so soon estrange her affections from a person as feeling afraid of him.”

Still it rang false. He was ill-satisfied. Poor fellow! the ecstasy of bliss was already lowered in its tone. Alas for human nature! how speedily is rapture abated. Something was not right. His mind began to cloud and darken.

Presently he rose up, left the room, and let himself through the hall-door out of the house.

It was a blowing November night. The trees were tossing their leafless branches high in the air; the gray wandering

clouds crossing over the moon, and the sullen roar of the coming tempest might be heard over the distant woods.

He loved it so. These were nights which harmonised with the tone of his mind. He wandered along by the side of the house, and soon found himself under the bow-window of Eleanor's room. He looked up. There appeared to be no candle burning, but the fitful light of a flickering fire floated up and down upon the window-curtains which were drawn, though the shutters were not closed, and the window was open. Close by it a white figure lay extended upon the floor, in a half-recumbent position, her head and shoulders supported by pillows. He looked up and watched some little time, thinking, perhaps, she was sleeping; but presently he saw the arm move, and a handkerchief was pressed to the eyes.

"Eleanor," he said softly, "Eleanor, are you alone?"

There was a little start; then the handkerchief was withdrawn, and the face

bent forward to the open window, which, it must be observed, opened to the floor; but nothing was said.

“Eleanor, is it you? Are you alone? Eleanor, answer me.”

“Is it you, Randal?”

“Yes, my adored love.”

There was an appearance of agitation. Then the soft voice of Eleanor was heard again:

“Randal—I hope—Randal—I wish—”

“What do you hope? What do you wish? My loved, my dearest, my life, my soul’s soul. Only say what you wish—and if it were my heart’s blood you should have it.”

“Oh! not your heart’s blood! Oh, Randal! Don’t talk so. You cannot think how unhappy you make me.”

“Unhappy! my sweetest girl! Don’t say that. I would not make you unhappy for the whole world, Eleanor. I love you with a passion, with a truth, with a holy tenderness, which it is not for words to express. I love you more than myself,—more than every earthly being, or con-



sideration upon earth. If I may live for you, I am more blest than the angels of heaven; if I might even die for you, I should esteem myself happier than I deserve. So my sweetest, sweetest Eleanor, don't be nervous and afraid. How can you be afraid of your old friend? Why, my love, I have loved you from a little child; and have you not loved me? A little,—a little; nay, do not turn away your head, I will not ask you to confess it again. But you weep,—you are weeping. Don't weep, Eleanor. Don't weep, Eleanor!"

"Ah, Randal! Randal! Who would have thought that you had so much heart?"

"I never had till you created it, Eleanor. You have made it,—it is yours—Take, take it, take it, Eleanor Wharncliffe! Use it generously, and accept it frankly."

She made no answer. She bent her head down upon her hands; she seemed weeping violently.

He heard her sob, then faintly shriek,

“Oh! Oh!”—then the limbs began to quiver; she was in convulsions.

He tried to spring up to her assistance, but the window was too high. He called aloud; he ran this way and that. He could not bear to leave the window; he shouted for help,—he was in despair.

His shouts and cries were at last heard; presently Cary was seen rushing to the window to help her young mistress, and soon after Lady Wharncliffe appeared.

“Lift her to her bed. Oh, Randal,” she said, half reproachfully, half anxiously, “Why did you come here after what I have just been telling you? And what have you both been saying?”

“Oh, I was a fool and a madman! But is she better? How is she going on? Is she better?”

“Yes,” looking towards the bed, “She’s coming round.”

Presently Lady Wharncliffe knelt down, and putting her head out of the window, said, in a low voice, “Pray tell me what you have been saying.”

“Don’t ask me! I can’t tell you!

Words that would have been of fire, if they had done me justice."

"But she,—what did she say?"

"Ah, nothing, nothing! Faint ejaculations in that voice of angel sweetness, that was all. I was a brute and a fool to persist in tormenting her. It was as you said—and so she fainted away."

Lady Wharncliffe was satisfied, and drew her head within the window again.

"But is she better? How is she? Tell me she is better."

"Yes, yes!—get along, be content,—She's coming round. But for goodness' sake get away. You have done mischief enough to-night. Get away, get away!"

## CHAPTER IX.

Forbear—forbear! Oh no! Not thus,  
With sacrilegious hand  
Profane the Temple!

MRS. H. SANDBACH.

“VERY well, Eleanor; I am answered, or rather, I am not answered at all. Your arguments have no effect upon me.—I think you selfish, and I think you absurd. You are absorbed in your own feelings, and never think of his.—You have got some romantic notions of your own into your head, and scorn to listen to the representations of one a little more experienced in the world, I should think, than yourself.”

Eleanor made no reply. She sat there, looking so pale and ill,—so utterly exhausted by the mental and bodily agitations of the last fourteen hours, that she was really scarcely able to articulate—far less to contend a matter.

“Now, don’t be sullen, Eleanor. We all know you can take refuge in sullenness when you are at a loss for reasons.—Don’t be obstinate.—It is that sullen obstinacy in your disposition which drives your father mad; and I have often heard him say he would rather have to do with the most violent little vixen in the world, than with you in your fits of silent depression. And I must own, Eleanor, they try me very much—and I don’t think it is quite treating me as I deserve from you, child.”

And Lady Wharncliffe’s voice slightly trembled. She really was moved. She thought herself a very unkindly-treated mother.

“I am sure,” said the poor girl, sadly, and in a voice which her weakness rendered very low and trembling, “that I do

not mean to be sullen; but I am very weak, mamma. I do not intend to be obstinate . . . . I don't know what papa means by calling me so obstinate . . . . I wish, I am sure, to be docile and obedient in everything; but there are things,—mother,—mother,—it seems so treacherous, so wrong.”

“And that it is which puts me out of all patience, Eleanor;—as if your father or I should be capable of exacting from you anything either treacherous or wrong.—What can be more simple, or what can be more kind, or more reasonable?—All we ask of you is, that you will merely give Randal Langford the opportunity of pressing his suit, and endeavour to wean you from a most unfortunate and degrading state of feeling . . . ; and that, during this, you will be wise enough, and kind enough, to conceal a certain part of your history, which it can do him no possible good to know,—which he has not the least right in the world to expect to know, as it is quite over,—and which it would, of course, make him very wretched, under his pre-



sent feelings, to be made acquainted with. I do not see that there is anything so very wrong or treacherous in showing a little consideration for the feelings of a man so devotedly attached to you; rather than thinking, as you are for ever doing, of the right and the wrong as regards yourself. This, pushed too far, is only another form of selfishness, in my opinion."

The pale cheek dropped upon the hand; the eyes were bent upon the floor. She seemed to hesitate . . . . That voice of intense feeling,—that cry of the soul, not to be mistaken, which she had heard at her window the few hours before, still rang in her ear.

Lady Wharncliffe saw her advantage, and went on:

"Eleanor, let me speak to you as a friend,—not with the authority of a mother—Do you know Randal's history?"

"No, mamma. What do you mean?"

"Do you know the cruel insult he received at college? And, that his family *principles*,—how unimaginably absurd people can be!—however, that the prin-

ciples in which these his worthy parents brought him up, forbade him to wipe away the infamy of the affront in the way every man of honour on earth but himself would have done.—In short, that he refused to send a challenge—and rather than abandon his principles,—you are all of you enough to make one hate the name,—left college,—and his has been a miserable, disappointed, embittered life ever since. Has he ever told you this part of his history?”

“No, mamma,” looking up, and fixing her eyes upon her mother’s face with an air of great interest. “What do you tell me? My head is confused; I do not understand. How was it?”

“Why, that Randal was grossly insulted when he was at Cambridge, by some impudent young Irishman or other; and because he had been taught by this excellent father and mother of his,—I have no patience with your *good* people,—that it was wrong to send a challenge, be the occasion what it might,—(I don’t advocate duelling, I am sure; but there

*are* circumstances . . . .) — what does he do, but instead of putting a pistol-bullet through his adversary's body, as any rational creature, smarting under the affront, would have done,—what does Randal do—but fairly turn tail—run away from Cambridge, and come down to hide his blushes here.”

The young girl's eyes were riveted upon her mother.

“ Now, you know, child, conscience and principle, and all that sort of thing, are excellent, no doubt; but when one has obeyed them, they don't always prevent one feeling very small and uncomfortable. And so this affair rankled in Randal's heart—for no creature on earth, be he what he may, likes to have been horse-whipped, and not to have had his revenge. And so Randal has been a miserable man ever since,—the most gloomy, wretched spirits at times,—and all because he adhered to what he thought right. His mother tells me, that till you came, he was quite a lost being, his sense of dishonour was so keen, and his sense of injury so bitter;

but that your presence has acted like a charm upon him, that he is restored to himself, is become quite an altered creature, and bids fair to turn out at last what he once promised to be,—a first-rate man.”

Still Eleanor was silent ; but the changes of her countenance were not unmarked by her mother, who resolved to pursue her advantage, and thus went on :

“ Now, my love, here it is. Your own happiness is, or you fancy it is, ruined by an unfortunate and most misplaced attachment. You are not happy as you are,—you are not likely to be happy again—at least so you think. If unhappy you are to be, what matters it to you whether it be in one way or the other? But it matters everything to one who has always loved you, and been kind to you, and whose happiness you hold in your power. Indeed it matters to him, and a great deal more than matters ; for there is no knowing to what extremities a disappointment in his first love might drive such a being.—Now it is for you to con-

sider this.—Will you be the cause of ruining Randal Langford body and soul? or will you do a little violence to your own romantic feelings, and . . . .”

“Ah mamma! you confuse me. I do not seem to know what is right or wrong.”

“I should think it was easy enough to know what was right or wrong if people would not wilfully shut their eyes to it. But I have done. You must decide as you please. However, pray do not forget, as you imaginative people are apt to do, the plain facts of the case; and there is not the least doubt of the fact as regards Randal Langford’s feelings and character. The inevitable ruin of both will be the consequence of your *conscientious* regard to the—*gratification of your own feelings*.”

Then Lady Wharncliffe rose and made a few paces, as if about to quit the room; but she returned to the fire, and standing in front of her daughter, said,

“But one thing I repeat—I urge—I would command, if you gave any weight to a parent’s commands upon such subjects—but I conjure you, Eleanor, if you

have the least regard for *his* peace and happiness, to keep the secret of that absurd Cheltenham affair inviolate. You do not know the misery you might inflict, and for no possible use upon earth.—I therefore beg of you, whatever else you may decide upon, to resolve sacredly to adhere to this;” and she once more turned to go away.

“Promise me at least,” said she, again returning, and speaking most earnestly and seriously, “that you will not betray this secret to Randal till you and I have had an opportunity of discussing this matter again.”

“Yes, I will promise that, mamma.”

Upon which Lady Wharncliffe immediately left the room.

Her narrative had produced its effect.

She left Eleanor in a state of feeling altogether changed. In spite of the sophistry of her mother’s arguments, there was something in the idea of sacrificing herself for Randal’s happiness which was dear to her heart. It responded to the tone of her highly-wrought feelings; it called



forth every grateful and generous sentiment of a most grateful and loving nature. What her mother said of the impossibility of being happy herself, and of the devotion of her life to the happiness of another, seemed to relieve and soothe her,—to lift the heavy cloud that hung upon her prospects; and to hold out a distant view of usefulness and peace. Then she loved and pitied Randal; and his history, as thus told, excited in her the warmest admiration and sympathy. She was deeply affected with the idea of this blighted life, this sacrifice to a higher sense than that of mere worldly honour, honouring with intense sensibility the strength of feeling which Randal had shown. Women are captivated by strength in any of its forms, perhaps most of all when displayed in the proud and silent endurance of great suffering.

The ideas of Eleanor took a turn not unnatural. She began no longer to look upon Randal Langford as a lover to dread and to fly, but as an unhappy and injured man, to solace and console—as

the victim of virtuous principle to be recompensed. Gradually her spirits began to revive; the heart to resume its more natural and tempered beatings; the thoughts to brighten, under the sweet sense of sacrifice to another, well-deserving such a sacrifice; of happiness to be bestowed if not received—happiness to be bestowed upon one most deserving and most unfortunate. These soothing ideas began to pervade her thoughts, giving that sense of peace and satisfaction which is the recompense of generous and disinterested feelings.

She sat a long time musing, and the more she mused the more tranquil she became.

Her mother had the prudence to leave her to herself for about an hour, then she returned. She cast an anxious glance at her daughter's face, at once discerned the change which had taken place there, and proposed that she should finish dressing and accompany her down-stairs.

Luncheon was over, and the little party dispersed. There was no one in the draw-

ing-room but Mrs. Langford, who, placed upon a small chair, was sitting upright by the side of the fire, engaged in reading a book of somewhat antiquated appearance.

She rose from her seat as the two ladies made their appearance, and with an expression of more animation and cordiality than usual in her countenance, came up to them, and taking Eleanor by both hands, kissed her upon the forehead, saying,

“ My dear Eleanor, I am very glad to see you down. It was sad to have you so poorly last night,—I hope it is all over.”

“ Thank you, madam,—it is quite over now.”

“ Well, sit yourself down in your old place upon the sofa, my dear, and keep quiet.”

And Mrs. Langford, with a kindness of manner very unusual to her, led Eleanor to her accustomed seat, and then, a thing quite out of character with the cold reserved manner of proceeding she generally pursued, sat down by her still holding her hand.

Lady Wharncliffe in the meantime took this opportunity of leaving the room.

Eleanor felt it almost alarming thus to be left alone with Mrs. Langford,—and she, holding her hand,—for Mrs. Langford's way of holding a hand was the most chilling thing imaginable. It seemed to produce quite an opposite effect from the usual magnetic power of opening the heart by that little symptom of affection. The chief thing you felt when you had hold of Mrs. Langford's hand, was, how you should put it down again,—shy and nervous—only thinking of the *hand* you held.

The taking any person's hand in the way of affection was an almost unheard-of proceeding, as I have said, on the part of Mrs. Langford; but the fact was, she was extremely pleased with the turn affairs had taken.

In spite of her coldness of temper, she loved her son,—what mother but loves her son?—and since that conversation with Mr. Langford recorded above, her attention having been awakened in that

direction, she had found reason to be very seriously apprehensive as to the state of his mind.

She had been much pleased with Eleanor from the first interview. There was something in the softness and gentleness of her countenance and manners, the extreme refinement of her appearance, the low and sweet voice, and the beauty of her face and form, which won upon Mrs. Langford greatly.

So cold, stiff, and harsh herself, the contact with the melting sweetness of this lovely girl produced a strange but very delightful sense of contrast, which was heightened when she saw Eleanor and her son together—a thing they constantly were.

She thought that nothing formed a prettier picture than the tall dark young man and the delicate fair girl. It was, in truth, a beautiful one, set off with all the force of light and shade. Randal, too, seemed so altered, so reanimated, so amiable, so happy! Add to this that every other sentiment of the mother's proud

heart was gratified. This was a most safe and respectable connection. There was nothing in it to fear in any way. Besides, Eleanor was of so quiet and retiring a temper, so fond of a secluded life in the country, that the only possible objection which might have arisen from the gay worldly habits of her parents was set at rest. Eleanor, it was evident, was one to make herself perfectly content in the retirement of Ravenscliffe. Randal would not be tempted to leave it, and for her sake to enter that gay world, which was a subject of abhorrence and dread to Mrs. Langford, she, being one of the many in her day, who forgot that the Father of Evil might be found wandering in solitary places as well as in crowded palaces. The temptations she dreaded for her son were those of gaiety and dissipation alone; the errors into which a man is liable to fall, if he enters into mixed society, the only ones she feared. She quite overlooked those equally dangerous, and to her son most peculiarly dangerous, of living in the unchecked indulgence of



his own natural tempers and passions, unschooled and uncorrected by the rough contact with others. She forgot that the most perilous trial to which Randal could be exposed, the most injurious position in which he could be placed, was his present one of solitary importance, surrounded only by his inferiors and dependants; absorbed in himself, in his own affairs, thoughts, and feelings, monarch of all he surveyed, and almost as solitary as Crusoe in his island. So far, at least, as hearing the voice of truth or contradiction was concerned.

Mrs. Langford's thoughts were accustomed to travel in but a narrow circle. She could discern good and evil in their more positive and roughly-defined shapes; she had no notion of—she had not even a name—for the finer distinctions in morals. With her there was but one description of sins to be avoided—the sins to which commerce with mankind exposes a man. So long as the conduct was externally regular, she totally forgot to inquire how it might be going on with

the heart. She forgot that the great and good Master, whilst he exacted the utmost purity of conduct, forgot not to dwell upon purity of soul—and that amongst the sins which corrupt the soul He enumerated pride, covetousness, censoriousness, hatred, and envy.

Nevertheless, groping in the dark as she did, she, like many other gropers, was so fortunate as to hit upon the very best means that could have been devised to obviate the evils of her own system; and she seized upon it and prized it, when she had the good luck to hit upon it, with a sort of blind instinctive feeling of its value, though without a distinct perception of that in which this value consisted.

She liked the gentle Eleanor on her own account, too, very much. She thought her peculiarly well adapted to be her son's wife; and so far she was quite right; but her reasons for this preference were as false as her instinct was true. She liked the thought of Randal marrying Eleanor, because she would keep him out of the world. A better motive would have been,

because she would soften, mould, and prepare him for it.

She had, however, been holding Eleanor's hand to an unreasonable length of time, till Eleanor's fingers and heart too seemed gradually freezing under the contact ; and she had been saying,

“ My dear Eleanor, you must allow me to enter upon the interesting subject which has occupied all our minds for the last twenty-four hours, and to assure you how truly Mr. Langford and I approve of my son's choice, and sympathise in his hopes of happiness. My dear, you could not enter any family where your amiable qualities will be more highly esteemed than in this.”

“ I am very much obliged to you, madam ; thank you very much, but . . . .”

“ It is most dear to our hearts, the idea of adding to our family circle, by receiving into it an individual so gifted and accomplished in all the more valuable points of character, as well as so sweetly lovely, as my dear Miss Wharncliffe ; and I am sure both Mr. Langford and myself shall

do everything in our power to render a daughter . . . .’”

Eleanor was confounded beyond measure by this address. Hurried, and distressed, to find the matter, upon which she was only just beginning to feel the excessive repugnance of her first feelings a little giving way, treated in this strange form and manner as a thing altogether settled—an affair in which there was nothing further to be done, no fresh steps to be taken, and from which there was no retreat.

She did not know what to say. Whether she spoke or was silent she was equally in danger of producing a wrong impression. She did not intend irrevocably to refuse Randal Langford, still less could she tolerate the idea of accepting him at present. She wanted time—she wanted to be urged, to be persuaded, to be gradually led to that step, which for his sake, and the sake of all, she wanted to find it possible to take. But she knew Mrs. Langford too well not to feel sure that all these shades of feeling would be unintelligible to her. That a plain yes or no, at once, was all that she

could comprehend—that not to say no would be according to her ideas to say yes, and that she exposed herself because she could not quite say that no—to be considered and to be represented to Randal and to the two fathers as having unconditionally engaged herself.

She felt excessively uncomfortable, and still more uncomfortable, because Mrs. Langford held and frigidly pressed her hand. She, however, at last, under pretence of taking her pocket-handkerchief, managed to draw that away; and then she felt, oddly enough as she thought, more able to say what she wanted to say; and when a pause ensued in Mrs. Langford's formal assurances of esteem and affection, she began,—

“Thank you, madam; I am sure I feel your flattering kindness very much—but this has come upon me so suddenly, and I am so easily hurried, I have not had time to collect my thoughts. I really——”

“Your sweet confusion, my dear, is very natural and allowable to a delicate mind like yours upon such an occasion. Believe



me, I quite understand and admire you for it; but here comes your mother and Randal."

They at that moment passed the window together, walking very fast; and in the next minute they entered the room, before Mrs. Langford, in her slow way, had finished her sentence.

Randal looked flushed and heated; his stern features agitated with feeling, his chest heaving with strong emotion. He hurried up to the sofa, and casting a look upon his mother, as if beseeching her to leave them alone, took Eleanor by the hand. She looked up at him, and never was face more full of softness; she could not help being deeply interested, after all she had heard, by the excessive emotion he displayed. She no longer felt that dread of meeting him, of coming to an explanation, which had kept her so many hours up-stairs. She felt a wish to hear what he had to say, and still greater wish to explain herself as far as possible; but stupid Mrs. Langford seemed to be resolved to keep her place. However, Lady Wharncliffe was one of



rather different perceptions, and seeing that Mrs. Langford showed no intention of moving, she, with her usual easy assurance, went up to her, and putting her own arm in hers, said,

“These young things will never find a word to say to one another whilst we keep watching them in this way. Come along; I want to be taught the new stitch you were to show me—let us go to your dressing-room.”

The door closed after them.

## CHAPTER X.

Ope, folded rose !  
Longs for thy beauty the expectant air,—  
Longs every silken breeze that round thee blows ;  
The watching summer longs to vaunt thee fair.

W. C. BENNETT.

THEN Randal took Eleanor's other hand, and bending down his head upon both, so that his face was concealed, muttered, in a tone of deep feeling—

“Eleanor, how shall I ever thank you?”

“Ah, Randal——”

“Eleanor, I am not a man of many words—I do not know how to express my feelings as others would do.” He continued to whisper in a very low tone, whilst he pressed his face against her

hands with such intense respect and tenderness mingled! "Few words come to me," he went on, "upon any occasion; angel!—life!—light!—own!—these are what I would say; but they are vulgar and desecrated terms, they express nothing of what I would say."

"My dear Randal," at last she found breath and courage to utter in so low a voice that she was hardly to be heard, "I had a good deal that I wished to say to you—that I think I ought to say to you."

The perfect assurance he seemed to feel that he was accepted again threw her into perplexity. What should she say—what could she do? Had there been anything like presumption in the manner in which he took it for granted that she had accepted him, she would have known how to repress it at once; but this humble gratitude in the haughty, stern Randal, affected her very much. She knew not what to do—To give a cruel and unexpected blight to all these feelings, was a greater effort of courage than she felt capable of; and yet

she felt as if she were suffering herself in a manner, gradually to slide to destruction down a precipice, from which one firm, vigorous effort would have rescued her. But that effort she knew not how to make. Her heart had been deeply moved by what she had heard from her mother that morning; she had been accustomed to love him, too, and feel grateful to him from her infancy. She was very much touched by this humble tenderness in one she had been so accustomed to look up to, almost to fear, and yet—

Ah, yet! In spite of all, there was another — another so different — perhaps less worthy in himself, certainly less fervent in his attachment to her. But, oh, oh!— And her poor heart, like a fluttering bird, beat against the wires of its cage so wildly! in terror of it knew not what, vainly endeavouring to escape, it knew not how. All she could keep repeating, in that soft, most musical voice of hers, was, “Oh, Randal! oh, Randal!”

And what could he desire more? Certainly these gentle exclamations were not

calculated to undeceive him. He continued there in silent rapture ; his head bowed down, pressing his cheek to her hand.

She felt as if every moment she suffered to pass thus, was, as it were, confirming the tacit engagement ; yet she wanted courage to withdraw her hand. At last, she gently endeavoured to do so.

“ Don’t take your hand away, my love,” he said at last, raising his head ; “ you do not know how dear its possession is to me.”

But she persisted with a little more resolution at this speech, which still she found it impossible to know how to reply to. She looked hurried and embarrassed, as she gently struggled to get her hand released.

He looked up at her. There was a something in her face at that moment which he did not like. He knew not what it was, or why ; but his feelings felt suddenly chilled by it. He immediately let go her hands ; and resuming his chair, —for he had fallen upon one knee by the

side of her sofa,—said, “Eleanor, what is the matter with you?”

She felt more and more hurried. It seemed as if every sentence he uttered should be one exactly calculated to render it impossible for her to answer it as she ought, and so as to lead to further explanation. What was it?—How was it? It was as if she were under the spell of an enchantment, which rendered her powerless. As it had been with his mother before, so it was now with him.

There was something so positive, so unquestioning, in the way in which both seemed assured that everything was settled, that it seemed as if by an invisible force she were compelled tacitly to acquiesce in the conclusion.

Then her thoughts cast a hasty glance upon the circumstances around her; and a voice seemed to say, “And why not?—What is there to prevent you? Why should you not yield at once? Why inflict unnecessary pain—So much, such exquisite pain? Why not suffer yourself,



poor passive atom, to be whirled down the stream of destiny, unresisting ?”

As, wearied out with long-continued fatigue, some poor wretch lays himself down to sleep, and feels, even if the chamber be tottering or flaming round him, that rather than make fresh exertion he would perish, so he might but remain quiet,—thus Eleanor felt,—as if she would rather abandon herself to misery than contest the matter—rather perish than make fresh efforts. The temptation was so great to give way—to have done with it—to yield herself to Randal, and take her fate.

Assured as she was of Lord Lisburn’s inconstancy, there seemed really nothing to set upon the opposite side; except that deep master-feeling of a woman’s heart—preference for another. But even this was weakened, for she was herself so weakened. She wanted rest—she must have rest. A conclusion this way would bring immediate rest; any other way offered nothing but a frightful prospect of contention, in which she felt certain

she should be worsted at last.—Contention with her own family, such as she had gone through with regard to Sir William Stanhope, and which she shuddered at the idea of having repeated. But, far more than this, to have to contend with her own regard for Randal—to inflict pain upon him whom she had long so affectionately loved, and whom she had just learned enthusiastically to esteem,—may she be forgiven at this moment that she had not the courage to explain herself?

So she answered Langford's alarmed, and almost jealous interrogatory, evasively. But the habitual softness of her manner gave an air of truth to the evasion.

“Dear Randal, you cannot be surprised that I should feel very nervous and hurried——”

The answer was again to cast himself at her feet, oh! so humbly!—so tenderly!—to find words at last to pour out a passion so deep, so pure, so tender, so real!

But we will not profane it. She listened.—She was deeply, deeply moved,

melted—filled with pity, with regret, that she had not a disengaged heart to give in return for so much sincerity of devotion. Deeply interested she certainly was ; and as for offering any explanation, or attempting to abate the happy security of his feelings, every moment that passed rendered it less and less possible.

---

Thus things proceeded. Hour followed upon hour, and day succeeded to day, and the same course was continued. Every evening when Eleanor was left alone, her head laid upon her pillow, and her maid departed, and she remained in silence, to take account of the thoughts and feelings of the day, the more cause she found to be dissatisfied with herself. For every fresh day found her entangled the more in that labyrinth of doubt in which she had suffered herself to become involved. Every testimony of Randal's devoted—we might almost say idolatrous—love, which she received, only made her the more

deeply conscious of the utter unworthiness of her feelings to respond to his;—more grieved for him, more angry with herself. The approbation with which she was now greeted by every one,—the happiness and satisfaction which every one seemed to feel, and the fond and flattering indulgence which she met with, as the result of this universal satisfaction, stung her to the heart, as the undeserved reward of secret treachery.

Her conscience reproached her with bitterness, and told her how, were the truth but known, the whole of things would be changed,—painted the angry surprise of her father,—the indignation of Mr. and Mrs. Langford,—the rage and despair of Randal. She had already had some experience of the form a passion, however pure and noble, might take in a character like his. All love, in some respects, inclines to hatred; all intense devotion to an almost cruel disregard of giving pain. Love is tender and generous in the extreme; but love inevitably breeds jealousy, and jealousy is implacable and pitiless.

The more intensely a man loves, the more delicately, purely, and nobly he loves,—the more excessive is his susceptibility to the power of that jealousy, and the more liable, under its influence, is he to be barbarous and unjust.

Randal was jealous to excess. Jealous, not only as the natural consequence of his almost wild attachment, but jealous from nature,—from his proud, irritable, susceptible, exclusive nature. His faults, as well as his qualities, all tended that way.

Every hour Eleanor passed in his company she became the more aware of this; and every hour she felt it more impossible to venture upon the slightest allusion to her secret. Yet every night she laid down under the bitter consciousness of how wrong she was; and every day she was humbled by the feeling, that could he but know the state of her heart, the fancied possession of which he so extravagantly and wildly prized, he would spurn it from him with a contempt almost amounting to hatred. She feared him;



she had been accustomed, in spite of all her childish confidence, to stand a little in awe of him, as the older and the wiser, and now and then not only the stronger, but as one whose strength might be used in deeds of injustice and violence. This awe, in spite of all his tenderness and devotion, gained force every day, because she felt she was deceiving him, and feared she was wronging him, and lost something of her own self-esteem at every fresh proof of his love and admiration.

These things gave a certain uncertainty to her manners which, though softened as it quite unintentionally was, by her invariable gentleness and sweetness, he detected. He did not give this feeling a name, for it took no definite form, but there was a something in her with which he felt dissatisfied, he knew not how; he knew not why. However, things went on progressing to the catastrophe as they mostly do in all courtships. The visit at Ravenscliffe came to a close. Eleanor with her parents was to return to Lidcote



Hall, her own home. Here Randal was in a few days to follow her, and make a short visit; and in about six weeks from that time, the parents talked about beginning their preparations for the marriage. January had now almost passed away, but the winter had set in severely after Christmas, and the party had been a good deal confined to the house; nevertheless, Randal had contrived to muffle up his darling in all sorts of warm furs, and to enjoy many a delightful walk upon the crisped paths of the woods; now rendered supremely beautiful by the wreaths of snow which lay heavy upon the branches of the fir-trees, and streaked with a line of light every tiny twig of the leafless oaks and birches. I think he enjoyed this happy period of life—that short one passed with the betrothed and adored, in all the ecstasy of hope, assured hope, which attends a propitious engagement—more in this rude season than he would have done in a more genial one; and Eleanor certainly got along better than if it had been in the summer or spring.

Those seasons were too full of associations with another.

“To-morrow, then you go; and what will become of me when you are gone, Eleanor?—The effect your presence exercises upon me is quite strange. You are literally to me as the sun. When you are here, everything is bright to the intellect and genial to the heart; the very atmosphere that I breathe seems changed. My feelings are all so softened and melted that I am become like a little child. Indeed, I can never recollect when I really was a little child feeling so childlike as I do now. Tell me, my darling, where you learned all your witchery? For you are a witch, a very witch, Eleanor. Do you know there *are* moments when I could almost believe you had literally cast a spell over me—falsified my vision—and that all this delusion of happiness was unreal, and would some day or other dissolve like a baseless dream.”

Such a speech as this was sure to distress her. She held down her head, and her eyes, bent upon the ground, seemed

following her feet as they tracked the thin snow upon the path. Could she have answered this appeal, by one slight pressure of the arm upon which she leaned, no words would have been necessary; all would have been said; but Eleanor could not be actively deceptive, only passively so. He felt disappointed that she did not speak, and said so.

“I do not know what to say,” she replied, “when you talk in this manner. I wish you would not speak in that exaggerated way, Randal. You invest me with a thousand ideal good qualities which I am far from deserving, but then in return you seem to suspect me of . . . .”

“Of things you do not deserve to be suspected of. Oh Eleanor! only say this—repeat this—swear this—only say, vow, swear; I am unjust, that I distrust you without reason—that you are no witch, no enchantress, no magician, but a real, substantial, sincere, loving woman. Be angry, be offended, only be *real*—only make me feel you are *real*.”

She sighed, and drooped her head a little lower.

“Ah!” he cried impatiently, “that is just what drives me mad,—that soft, passive, gentle way of taking my rude violence,—that submission, that unresistance—One would almost fancy that you felt that you deserved it, Eleanor,” he added angrily.

She sighed again, but it was more heavily than before; and then she muttered, “It is very difficult to please you.”

“Now, how can you say that?—when every look, gesture, syllable, is to me a source of distracting admiration. I love you to distraction—you know that I do, Eleanor. How can you be so unjust as to say, you do not know how to please me?”

“I did not intend to be unjust. I should be so sorry to be unjust; so sorry to be wrong,” she said, and the tears came to her eyes. “I wish—oh! how I wish to do right!”

“Right! What are we saying about right? I don’t want you to be right—

I want you to be real. I want to feel that you really love me, Eleanor; or, at least, that you really like, that I should love you."

She answered not.

"Will you not say so much as that, Eleanor?"

She lifted up those eyes of hers with such a soft deprecating look. He felt as if he could go distracted, as he had said, with love and admiration.

And in this manner such conversations usually ended,—the blind struggles of two hearts to break through the fetters that bound them, and understand each other and themselves. The more and more enthralled—but the more and more feeling that it was a thrall—she the more and more persuaded of the iniquity of the deceit she was practising; and yet, finding herself every day farther and farther from the possibility of explaining herself.

## CHAPTER XI.

Break, break, break,  
At the foot of thy crags, O sea !  
But the tender grace of a day that is dead,  
Will never come back to me.

TENNYSON.

THE wild sea-coast at the south-west of Ireland, and a dark stormy day.

The clouds roll heavily over the bare treeless waste of mountains stretching to the shore, where the Atlantic rolls its world of waters, falling with sublime force against the grand precipitous rocks, which, worn by the conflict of sixty centuries, still resist the force of the mighty waves. The wind howls mournfully amid



the crevices of the rocks; the dark waters break at intervals, thundering upon the sands; all around wears an aspect of grand and gloomy desolation.

Two gentlemen are walking upon the beach. The one a young man in the prime of youthful strength and beauty, but his face almost deformed by the violence of his emotions, is walking impetuously forward, every gesture betraying his grief and his impatience. The other, a small slender figure, is somewhat past the middle age, as the gray, scattered locks, which shadow a countenance of singular sweetness and gentleness, betray.

This last figure has something pliant and bending about it, which implies a certain deficiency in muscular energy, though there is no appearance of the weakness arising from latent disease. It would seem as if disuse alone had in some degree impaired the powers of the physical man; but the countenance showed that the same inactivity had not reached his mind. The expression of his

face was intellectual; the eye bright and penetrating; the brow thoughtful and intelligent; the cheek pale, and apparently worn by mental toil and vigil—the mouth unintelligible.

The young man kept walking forwards with a certain air of passionate impatience, his companion with some difficulty contriving to keep pace with him. Yet the speed the younger used was evidently not that of one in pursuit of any object; for when he had reached a certain bold point of precipitous rock, which stood there its time-worn face exposed to the force of the western storms, and with the waves boiling and breaking at its feet, he stopped, paused a few seconds, cast his eyes over the waste of waters, and then turning round, resumed his hasty and impetuous walk.

This scene had lasted for some time, passing in perfect silence. Nothing was to be heard but the hoarse murmur of the waves lashing upon the sands, and the screams of the white sea-birds as they revelled in the storm, now floating in the

air, now dropping swiftly into the waves, now soaring aloft amid the precipices.

Not one word was exchanged ; for the young man, whose whole aspect bespoke a passionate indignation, seemed resolved not to speak, and indeed, appeared to be endeavouring to shake off his companion. He, however, still perseveringly held on, and was the first to break silence.

“How long is this paroxysm to continue ?” at last he said. But it was in a tone most bland and kind.

The other turned almost fiercely round : —“How long ? Till either brain or heart give way, I care little which. If the one, it will kill me at once—if the other—I shall do the good office for myself.”

“Young man—Christian—Child of the Church——”

“Silence!—I am neither. What has your Christianity done for me ? What has your Church done for me ? What have you done for me ? I renounce you, one and all !” answered the other vehemently ; then, suddenly stopping in his walk, he struck his forehead with his hand.

The face was lifted up ; the dark storm of passion upon it cleared away ; a bright thought seemed to have struck him as he uttered the word “renounce ;” and he looked up wildly to the sky.

The priest—for it was a Catholic priest with whom the young man was walking—watched the change of expression anxiously ; he seemed puzzled by it. He did not speak for a few moments, but appeared occupied in observing and reflecting. His companion suddenly resumed his walk, as if again determined to shake him off, but he pertinaciously followed.

“ You speak with great violence, and what is worse, with impiety, young man. Will these sudden bursts of passion never be controlled ? ”

“ Oh, yes, they will be controlled. Oh, yes. Never fear—make yourself sure of that—They will be controlled ! ”

“ You say this whilst every feature is working with passion. Do you call this exercising the virtue of self-control ? Do you call such violence as you have for the

hour and a half been exhibiting, an exercise of self-control ? ”

“ No taunting, sir, if you please. You know I will not bear *that*. No, I did not say that I *had*, but I said that I *would*. Yes, yes, I will change—I am changed ! You shall have no further cause to reproach me with my impetuosity.”

“ I am glad to hear it.”

“ You have little cause.”

“ I shall have great cause, when I see you—the son of my care, my child in holy Church, prove yourself a worthier member of that church by a conscientious submission to that which her interests, and your loyalty to those interests, imposes.”

“ Yes, yes !—cause—you shall have cause—cause enough—Cause enough to rejoice in the odious and dishonourable deception which, in the name of holy Church and your loyalty to her interests, forsooth ! you have practised upon me. Enough, enough, Mr. Sullivan !—Why will you persist in following me in this manner ?—Between you and me, henceforth, everything is ended.”

“I will not believe it—I will not believe it, Marcus—I will not believe it!” cried the priest with much emotion—it was no simulated emotion; “what I have done was intended for the best—your honour and happiness——”

“My honour! My happiness!” scornfully.

“Yes, Marcus; *your* honour—*your* happiness! The honour and happiness of your family—your father—your mother—your Church——”

“I renounce them all!”

“Yes,” he went on passionately, as he wildly threw up his arms into the air, and cast up a face full of wretchedness to the sky—“One and all! I renounce you all!—Treachery! infamy!—breach of faith! breach of honour!—vile! vile!—Mean calculations!—paltry views of interest!—execrable deceptions!—infamous lies!—All, all of you! Father and mother—Home and country—Priest and Church—I renounce you one and all!”

The priest seemed thunderstruck—shocked and grieved beyond expression.



There was a reaction in his thoughts and feelings ; for the moment all his perceptions seemed confounded. In a bewildered manner he, for the first time, hastily put the question to himself, whether he was right ; whether what he had done had been indeed right. But long-accustomed habits of thought resumed their sway, and his countenance was soon restored to its usual air of tranquil, gentle, yet determined resolution, and he said, “ Your invectives are rude and unjust ; and they demonstrate at once the violence of your passions, and your ignorance of the obligations of duty. Both your parents and I have been led to act in this matter by no base suggestions of self-interest ; by no miserable schemes of personal ambition. The desire to rebuild a fallen house, to restore an ancient family, is no impulse deserving, either to be stigmatised as one of base self-interest, or mere personal ambition. Such a house as yours belongs to its country. Such blood as flows in your veins, forms part of the rich treasure of your Church. Generation after generation in her cause

it has been shed. At her call, and for her sake, both blood and worldly wealth have been lavished.—The contemplation of such deeds, the meditation of such sacrifices, elevates the mind, ennobles and enlarges the view of life.—Men who descend from those who have sacrificed family and estates, nay, life itself when needed, for the cause of holy Church, and of that divinely-instituted king, whose cause and hers were one—are apt to expect much—everything—from the members of the same brave race. Yes, young man, I acknowledge it. I *have* been mistaken; because I forgot that you did not belong to the same generation.—I forgot the degeneracy of the times. I see you are like the rest—a child of the present day—and yet——”

“I love honour as much as you, Mr. Sullivan,” cried the young man, interrupting him abruptly; “but if the honour of those gone-by times, about which you make such a parade, consisted in practising such deceits, as you have practised upon me—I tell you I renounce it, and defy it.

Scorn it—and would rather be a renegade and a slave, than *such* a man of honour.”

“Violent—violent! Ever violent! How should a man, with his brain so intoxicated with rage, be expected to view objects justly, or to argue accurately? The aspect of all things must be confused to his perceptions.—It is futile to reason with one who is no longer in possession of his own reason.”

This was uttered in a gentle, but slightly sarcastic tone.

The young man made no reply.

He turned his head away,—and hastily resuming his walk, directed his steps homewards. The priest followed; but his companion managed so to keep a head that his face could not be seen. He was right to conceal it; it was beaming with joy. His heart was bounding with joy—new-born, irresistible joy.

He had burst his fetters. At that fatal word “renounce,” they had fallen from him, as the withs from the freshly-aroused Samson. His soul expanded with new-

born liberty. He could scarcely control the ecstasy of his sensations.

He accelerated his pace, so that the priest could no longer keep up with him. Panting, his face flushing, Mr. Sullivan began to feel that this hurried walking, or rather running, was inconsistent with his dignity; he slackened his steps, fell behind, and the young man succeeded in his object of getting rid of him.

---

The priest, having once parted company with his companion, seemed to abandon the idea of following him further. He watched him as he strode vehemently onward, till he was lost behind a jutting point of rock. Then he turned round, and walked slowly in an opposite direction; and, as he walked, he fell into deep reflection.

That cry of wronged and insulted natural rectitude which he had heard, now that he was left to his own reflections, again sounded in his ear. There was a some-

thing in his own heart,—there is something in every heart,—however sophisticated, which *will* echo to it. False views of duty, false ideas of God, false principles of right, false notions of honour, had done much to darken and to pervert a man endowed by nature with an honest heart and a good understanding. They might, and they did, habitually stifle, but they could not entirely eradicate, that instinctive sense of the just and the right, that pure, innate perception of the honest and the true, which is the natural endowment of every human being. Long had such sentiments lain smothered and dormant in his mind; but now the wild exclamations uttered by Marcus had struck home, and the whole soul of the priest was in disturbance. As he paced up and down upon the beach of that little secluded bay where Marcus had left him, he began to review his conduct, and to examine it with a new and more scrutinizing eye.

What did the prospect present? Nothing but one undeviating course of the

deepest duplicity,—a regular system of deception, pursued with the most unhesitating perseverance, and in the course of which neither assurances, nor insinuations, nor artful implications, nor even positive assertions, had been spared. And each and every one of them had been—false! Nor had his conduct been confined to this breach of faith in words and looks alone. He had descended to acts,—acts which, in any other cause, he would have stigmatised as those of the most degrading meanness and treachery.

He had tampered with the integrity of servants; he had condescended to play the part of a thief and a spy; he had, in short, during the last few months, carried on a system of darkness and concealment at which his very soul, in any other cause, would have revolted . . . . And now, at last, he had been suddenly aroused to view objects in a new light, and to put to himself the question of questions,—Could the end authorise the means?

One of the most fearful errors of that Church to which Mr. Sullivan belonged,



is its fatal admission of casuistry into morals,—one of the most deleterious among the poisoned fruits of that tree, the root of which is no longer planted firmly upon the Rock from which it originally sprang. That tree which has suffered itself to derive nourishment from other sources, and pollute the stream of life at its spring. Once admit casuistry into morals, and morality exists no longer. I mean morality as a principle,—as an immutable principle of human life.

A great deal of good may be done, and no doubt is still done, from the superficial action of general influences; but the root of the matter is no longer there. General influences may be evil as well as good; and the course of the man's life remains at the mercy of such accidents. He may do well, and he does, when it happens that the right and the expedient coincide; but woe to him when they are separated, and he has to choose between the two diverging paths! He has lost the one only infallible guide,—the one undeviating principle of conduct which, blow

high, blow low, through fair ways or through foul, carries him forward in sound unflinching righteousness. His moral being becomes a confused chaos of warring principles, between which he has to choose as best he may. The mighty Voice which sounded over chaos, and reduced the struggling mass to a sublime order, no longer speaks within his soul. He has disowned its authority, and has listened to that of another,—turned away from his God to give his allegiance to his Church.

This Church—Mr. Sullivan's Church—had, as he conscientiously believed, demanded from him the service, performed at such a heavy price. The interests of his Church as connected with those of his country, imperatively demanded, as he thought, that this sinking and once powerful family, with interests so inextricably linked with hers, should, if possible, be restored at any cost.

To a man accustomed from his earliest years to consider no sacrifice as too great when dedicated to this object, who

himself stood there an instance of such submission,—one who had offered up at this shrine all the natural affections of a very feeling heart, all the dearest ties of human life,—to him the substitution of one object of youthful attachment for another had perhaps appeared but as a trifling sacrifice. And it was not that he had exacted this sacrifice, and that he had used all his influence to strengthen the decision of the young man's parents as regarded this object, which went so hard with him now. No, it was the means,—the means which Marcus had stigmatised as so base, so degrading, so dishonourable. It was the means at which his better self now shuddered.

Mr. Sullivan had been taught by his Church—in defiance of the express injunctions of its living Head, Lord, and Master, now in heaven—that the end *did* justify the means—that we *might* do evil that good might come—that morality is not the changeless, the everlasting rock of ages upon which human society rests, and which neither time nor tide can

overthrow, but the shifting sand, which yields to every succeeding wave till its foundations are swept away—and, he had acted upon these principles.

As to the importance of the object he pursued, he never doubted of that for a moment. The end in view approved itself to his conscience; and until this moment, so utterly had it been blinded, he had never once hesitated as to the means. He had practised every species of deceit upon the young man, and with impunity, even to the subtraction of letters—but here his system of concealment had broken down. This positive act could not, like words, looks, or insinuations, be smothered over or denied. It was at any moment liable to be discovered—it *had* been discovered a few hours before, and at a moment most critical. The young man before us is Marcus Fitzroy, now Lord Lisburn—the woman he loved was Eleanor Wharncliffe. The house for whose restoration to wealth and consequence such sacrifices were demanded, was that of the Earl of Fermanagh.

Marcus had been, as we have seen, re-

called by his parents in order to marry him as his family desired, and every motive had been brought forward to induce him to acquiesce in the measure, but all had been in vain.

Marcus, it is true, hesitated as to what course he ought to pursue, and lingered in Ireland, perplexed between contending duties. Inclination and his high sense of honour pointed one way,—the earnest wishes of his parents, the influence of his priest, his own sense of family pride and dignity, and of what was due to his Church and to his House the other.

He had written repeatedly to Eleanor during these conflicts, flattering himself that he should receive from her such assurances of affection in return as would irrevocably engage him upon the side of inclination.

But no such assurances arrived. Not a line from Eleanor had ever reached him since his return; nor is this to be wondered at—not one of his letters had ever reached her. Every one that he had written had been abstracted, through the



infidelity of his servant, who, acting under a blind obedience to the requisitions of his priest, had placed them all in Mr. Sullivan's hands.

That gentleman it was also, as will be surmised, who had forwarded the provincial newspapers to Lady Wharncliffe. The articles which related to this affair having been inserted by himself. One reason being, his hopes that Lord Lisburn's resistance, founded upon his sense of what was due in honour to Miss Wharncliffe, might be met by a something of a similar nature as regarded Miss Vernor; namely, the publicity of his attentions. And this proceeding had not been without producing its effect. The pertinacious silence of the one, aided by the constant communications with the other, promised, in no short time, to decide the conflict. Such was the state of things until that very morning, when Mr. Sullivan, who kept up a careful correspondence with England, and watched every movement of Sir John Wharncliffe's family with intense interest, had, through the infidelity of a domestic,



received the intelligence that Miss Wharncliffe was upon the eve of marriage with the only son and heir of Mr. Langford of Ravenscliffe.

This intelligence he had just communicated at the time when we beheld Lord Lisburn displaying such an ecstasy of passion.

The news had, indeed, been received with a burst of anguish, for which the priest, well as he thought himself acquainted with the disposition of his young charge, was little prepared.

The agony into which Marcus had been thrown, his grief, his despair, seemed to know no bounds ; and when, in the course of the agitated conversation which had ensued, he had become, for the first time, aware of the deceptions which had been practised upon him, the violence of his indignation was indescribable. Contrary to his usual habits when much moved, the young Irishman had become suddenly silent. It seemed as if rage and scorn alike denied him utterance. In a sort of desperation he had continued walking up

and down the shore endeavouring to escape, as we have seen, from the priest, —but the priest would not leave him.

But reasoning, entreating, explanation were alike vain. The thoughts of Marcus were all in confusion. Passionate regret, awakened by the conviction that Eleanor was lost for ever. Vehement self-reproach for his supineness in thus suffering himself to be blinded and led; detestation of the means employed, and of passionate anger against the man who had thus deluded him, were united to a horror indescribable, at the thought of the man to whom Eleanor was about to be sacrificed. For, he remembered him well. The paroxysm that ensued was of the wildest violence.

In this whirlwind of passion he had continued to walk up and down in the manner just described, without the slightest attempt to curb the violence of his emotions. When suddenly, as he uttered the word “Renounce!” a thought had struck him, and diverted the whole course of his ideas. A new world seemed

to open before him,—new plans, views, and purposes to present themselves. His chest ceased to labour under the dreadful storm of grief which agitated it; the darkness in which he seemed wandering, lost, and desperate, was at once dispelled; the cloud was lifted—he saw, he felt, that all was not yet over; and his resolutions were sudden as was the change which had taken place.

To escape from the company of the priest was his first attempt, and he effected it with a determination very different from that with which during the last hour he had been trying to shake him off. At that time, it was only because the presence of Mr. Sullivan was oppressive, when Marcus was panting to be alone and give vent unrestrainedly to his feelings—now, he was become a positive obstruction in the course upon which the young man had resolved, and, with his usual spirit and resolution, the desire was carried into effect in a moment.

## CHAPTER XII.

“What, sovereign sir, I did not well,  
I meant well.”

WINTER'S TALE.

THE priest returned slowly to the house. He felt unwilling to enter it. Perplexed and ill-satisfied with himself, he felt the greatest repugnance to the idea of joining the family party,—one of which he constituted, for he resided with Lord Fermanagh.

He could scarcely endure the thought of confronting Lord Lisburn in the presence of his parents,—of exposing himself to the flashing scorn of that bright

eye before Lord and Lady Fermanagh, both of whom he greatly loved and respected. Not that he exactly feared that they would participate in their son's contemptuous indignation at the part which had been played;—they had been long habituated to that sophistry, which justified the disguising of truth for purposes of policy. He knew how deeply anxious they were for the attainment of the object in view,—and he believed that, like too many of their creed, they would esteem all the means admissible employed to bring the purpose to bear.

Still, he shrank from the thought of confronting Marcus in their presence. That vehement abhorrence of the false, in whatever cause, or however employed, which the young man had so passionately displayed, and which had, like a sudden light, awakened Mr. Sullivan's own mind to new perceptions, and for a few moments presented things under a totally new moral aspect, might act upon them also. And to have his conduct, even

for an instant, looked upon by others as he had been forced, as it were, to regard it himself, was more than he could bear.

So, slowly and unwillingly he walked towards the house ; the hoarse murmur of the sea, as it lashed the shore, and thundered and echoed among the rocks, sounding in his ears like the portent of coming woe. At last, however, he rounded the furthestmost point of rock which interposed between him and his object, and the stately castle of Lisburn rose in full grandeur before him.

It stood at the head of a beautiful bay, adorned with all the wild sublimity of that splendid and interesting western coast of Ireland, scooped out and hollowed by the waves of the vast Atlantic. Lofty mountains encompassed it behind, rising ridge beyond ridge in stately majesty, and lifting up their peaked heads among the clouds, which, dark and heavy, rolled slowly over them. The ridge of mountains terminated seaward abruptly, in the lofty precipitous cliffs which encircled the



bay; the huge faces of rock lifting up their frowning heads as if in defiance of the winds and waves. Several picturesque islands, rather like peaked mountain tops than islands, broke the view of the wild ocean, which came tumbling in with irresistible force among them, and pouring its giant waves in ceaseless succession upon the shore. It was a scene at once wild, grand, terrible, and beautiful.

The castle stood upon a gently rising ground, which sloped towards the sea; and which, presenting an unbroken surface for a considerable extent, displayed to perfection the splendid proportions of the edifice.

It was, indeed, a noble building. A real castle in the true Norman style, built by the Norman ancestors of this once haughty house. Its site was enormous, its proportions upon the grandest scale; but time and adversity had done their work, and the long decline in the family prosperity was visible in the general dilapidation of this their feudal seat. There was an air of decay and neglect

about every part of it. The walls were weather-stained and out of repair; the battlements in many places falling or fallen; the windows in most of the turrets in a ruinous condition; and long streams of Irish ivy, which grew against the walls, in many places in prodigious abundance, hung over and streamed with an air of desolation around them. Bats and jackdaws here found their abode, and nestled among the holes in the chambers and towers, a great portion of which, indeed, were entirely abandoned to them.

There, as Mr. Sullivan rounded the point, it presented itself—this giant remnant of another world and other days, raising its weather-beaten front drearily against the wintry sky. The heavens hung black and lurid above it, as it stood frowningly there, backed by those bare and rugged mountain ridges which were now rapidly darkening with the coming storm.

Slowly, slowly, he approached; but, however slowly he walked, arrive at last he must, and he reached a low postern door, which admitted him into the edifice.

He entered a low, narrow passage, which, winding for some distance in a sort of twilight obscurity, led to the little priest's chamber which he occupied. Whatever other faults—and they are many—may be charged upon the Irish priesthood, that of personal luxury is, certainly, not usually one.

The chamber was lowly and simple as the cell of a Franciscan friar. It was very small and gloomy; the ceiling low, the narrow Gothic window darkened by its heavy stone frame, and yet more by the wreaths and festoons of ivy which hung over and around it. The walls of the little apartment were simply whitewashed; but even the whitewashing seemed to have been done long ago for it was become gray and discoloured. One little, hard, pallet-bed in a corner, two wooden-seated chairs, a table, upon which lay a breviary, a few old, darkly-bound, and tattered books, and a human skull—with a large crucifix against one side of the wall, completed the furniture of the apartment.

The priest entered it, looking exceedingly exhausted and miserable, and sat down upon a chair with the air of one travailed in spirit and wearied in body. For, in truth, his heart was well-nigh broken, and his spirit was failing him within. He could not hide it from himself; he felt it—he knew it. His influence over this child of his affections was at an end, justly forfeited by his own mistaken conduct. He had strained the bow too far—it had given way.

The revolt had been declared; and the open declaration of revolt is, in such cases, everything. Never would he be again to Marcus what he had been. A reconciliation might be—would be—must be effected; but his power was at an end. Never again would they stand in the tender relation of spiritual father and child; never again should he see that impetuous but generous spirit bend to his instructions and representations, as the docile young steed to the curb; never again would that full confidence be

restored, which made him proud as a confessor, and happy as a man. He was very, very wretched.

These men, without family ties, often throw a passionate personal interest into their spiritual relations, of which the Protestant can scarcely form an idea. It is, at least, so far bad, that it engages a vast deal of selfish happiness in a cause where self ought to have no place at all; and leads men, under the guise of the most disinterested desire for the spiritual welfare of their neophytes, to a vast deal of inordinate personal feeling.

So it was in this case. Mr. Sullivan lamented the revolt of Lord Lisburn for the young man's sake, and for the sake of his family, much; but, for his own personal sake, a vast deal more. Indeed, he felt it most bitterly; and he sat there quite broken-down and overwhelmed, and for the present believing himself to be utterly incapable of standing another meeting with the young man, or, indeed, of doing anything but sit where he was, vainly attempting to compose himself.



And there he remained, until the dinner-hour—about three o'clock—at length arrived; and the large bell of the castle rang forth its iron summons. Sending out its sonorous, melancholy tones over those towers and surrounding mountains.

Lord and Lady Fermanagh entered the gloomy ancient dining-room by different doors, exchanged a few friendly greetings, and took each their several places at the table. The servants, half-a-dozen about, wild and untamed as mountain savages, but headed by a fine, respectable-looking butler, stood in attendance with an air of the profoundest respect. The butler proceeded to perform the duties of his office, by lifting the cover of a huge silver soup-tureen, which stood before the Lady Fermanagh.

“Better not take it away,” said the mistress of the mansion, after having helped her husband and herself. “Do you know where your young master and Mr. Sullivan are? I cannot think what they can be about.”

“Lord Lisburn and Mr. Sullivan have



been walking most part of the morning together, I believe, my lady. Lord Lisburn came in, and I saw him come in, and go up to his own room, but I think he went out again. I have not seen Mr. Sullivan."

"Send some one to both their rooms, and tell them Lord Fermanagh has sat down to dinner."

The order was obeyed. A few minutes afterwards Mr. Sullivan made his appearance; he looked pale and agitated, and made his apologies in a hurried, nervous manner.

"What is the matter?" asked Lady Fermanagh kindly,—whilst Lord Fermanagh looked surprised and inquiringly at the poor priest. "Has anything distressing happened? I hope not, indeed. Any of your flock ill? Any particular instance of misconduct down below, of distress, or sickness? Of distress and misconduct,—God knows we have enough among us; but something more than usual, I fear, has occurred.—Pray sit down here by the fire, my good sir, you look quite chilled and miserable."

He answered her inquiries with a tender, grateful glance, and a melancholy smile, and took the seat she pointed out, in silence.

“Do tell me. Has anything happened in the town down below to vex you?”

“No, Madam. Things go on there daily much as you emphatically describe it, with God knows how much of misery, sickness, and at times misconduct. Poor wretches! God help them! for man has little power—and even that little seems diminishing every day, under the spiritual darkness and political oppression of the land.”

“Do not talk in this manner, Mr. Sullivan,” interrupted Lord Fermanagh, who had been listening with a face of serious and melancholy attention to what passed. “Complaint is futile, worse than futile. It engenders like some hideous monster, the very evils which it laments. Don’t complain of the spiritual darkness existing in a flock almost entirely under your own care—and as for political oppression. They have the upper hand now, we

had it once. I suppose oppression is the natural result of the termination of a contest such as ours has been.—In that respect it matters little which side turns up the winner.—If our poor wretches would show a greater spirit of exertion, and spend less time in pitying themselves and their country, I think it might be the better for all parties.”

Mr. Sullivan bent his head submissively, but made no answer to this speech. Lady Fermanagh went red, then pale, cast up her eyes to Heaven in a sort of deploring deprecation of such sentiments, but presumed only to say, in a low voice, —“Alas! poor Ireland—Alas! for her fallen Church.”

Every one after this relapsed into silence. The silence was, however, after a little space, interrupted by Lady Fermanagh saying, in a somewhat pettish, impatient tone,—

“Why *will* Marcus never be punctual at dinner? Where can he be? Mr. Sullivan, he was last seen walking with you.”

“ We were walking, Madam, for nearly an hour and a half upon the sea-shore. After that, Lord Lisburn quitted me somewhat hastily, and turned towards the castle. I followed leisurely, but went to my own room, and I have not seen him since.”

“ I think Patrick never *will* come back. Please Murtagh, to another footman, go and see what they are all about ? ”

The servant last addressed obeyed ; but soon returned, saying that Lord Lisburn was not in his room, and that Patrick was gone to look for him.

No anxiety was felt or expressed at this report, and the dinner proceeded ; but when every one had finished, and still her son did not appear, Lady Fermanagh began to look anxiously at Mr. Sullivan.

“ Do you know where he was intending to go, or anything about him, Mr. Sullivan ? ” she asked.

“ Not in the least, Madam,” said the priest,—turning even paler than he was before ; “ but if you will give me leave I will go and seek him myself.”

“ I shall be very much obliged to you,

my dear sir, What *can* have led him to absent himself at this unusual hour? Surely he is not gone out in the boat— You, none of you saw him go out in the boat?”

“No boat could live for a quarter of an hour in such a sea as we have to-day,” remarked Lord Fermanagh. “Pray, my dear lady, be easy. Your son is safe, depend upon it, wherever he may be.”

“The Holy Mother of God, and all the holy Saints and Angels, grant it so! But my mind misgives me strongly.”

“I wish, my dear, it were possible that you could spare yourself all the self-inflicted misery of these misgivings, as you call them. Only reflect, since Marcus was in his cradle, upon the misgivings with which you have been visited upon every occasion when he has not returned, boy or man, precisely to the appointed hour. Yet, how invariably these misgivings have proved false, and you have always in due time received your son again, safe and sound. Depend upon it that will prove

to be the case now. If he does not come in to dinner he will appear at tea."

"I wish—I *do* wish, my lord, that Marcus were expected to render some little account of his goings and comings. How can we tell where he is, or what he is about? I wish I could persuade you to exact a little more of this accountability from him; I am sure it would spare me a world of anxiety and misery."

"I am sorry for your anxiety and misery; but what is self-inflicted no mortal can remove. I do not think it proper to exact this strict account from a man of Marcus's age. If he consent to live in his father's house, it must be upon the condition of feeling himself a perfectly free agent. Anything less would be intolerable to a young man of his spirit. How could *I* have endured it at his age? is a question I often ask myself, when, yielding to your representations, I feel inclined to exact what you wish. I would not have endured it for a day. I should have fled my country."



Lady Fermanagh answered this by a deep sigh, which almost approached to a groan; and, casting down her eyes, sat there the picture of sadness.

Lord Fermanagh had once been deeply grieved, and had sympathised profoundly with her when in distress; but that time was long past, and he, wearied by her habits of self-indulgence in misery, had accustomed himself to think of these melancholy humours as of a necessary evil, to which he must resign himself with as little disturbance of his own mind as possible. She had her priest to offer consolation when she needed it—to receive her confessions of weakness and cowardice, and reprove and guide her as best he might.

Lord Fermanagh surrendered all this species of power, as a matter of course, into Mr. Sullivan's hands, whom he looked upon as a sensible, and knew to be a pious and good man. He had long been in the habit of quietly leaving his wife alone when she was making herself wretched, or in extreme cases of sending

Mr. Sullivan to remonstrate with and encourage her.

“ Shall I remove the dinner, my lord ? ” asked the butler.

“ Yes ; your young master can have something when he comes in . ”

The dinner was removed, the wine set upon the table, Lord Fermanagh took up the yesterday's newspaper for the fifth time, and read, or pretended to read. Lady Fermanagh remained immovable, at the head of the table, looking the very picture of woe, and enduring in imagination all the horror and distress of seeing her son brought back, drowned by the upsetting of his boat, fallen from a precipice, or the victim of some unexpected act of violence. If she would, as her husband had desired, have looked back upon her life, what a sum of time thus spent, what an amount of useless misery entailed upon herself and others, it would have disclosed ! But self-examination was a process she was little accustomed to : good, wholesome, mental and moral discipline she knew nothing of. The duty of being

cheerful and happy had never entered into the conceptions of one taught to believe that the God she served was best worshipped by self-inflicted suffering, and took delight in self-imposed torture. She had conceived the idea, that to be miserable was to be pious and heavenly-minded, and to be cheerful and full of enjoyment worldly and unchristian. I wish there were none but the ascetics of her own persuasion who indulge these unworthy notions of their Creator, of "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

At length the door opened, and Mr. Sullivan reappeared. The face of the priest was agitated and heated, the drops arising from severe bodily exertion and mental distress mingled, stood upon his brow. His usual gentle composure was superseded by hurried abruptness of manner, as coming up to Lady Fermanagh he said—

"He is to be found nowhere."

She uttered a low suppressed shriek, and sank back in her chair. Lord Fer-

managh rose from his, and approached her. His heart had been already smiting him. He felt that he had been unkind.

“What do you mean, Mr. Sullivan?—My dear Agnes—be patient, don’t terrify yourself so. Has he not been seen to go out?—Has he taken one of the horses?”

“He *was* seen to go out, and he had a small portmanteau under his arm. One of the horses has been also taken out of the stable.”

“Then he is probably gone to Castle Vernor.”

“No, not to Castle Vernor,” said Mr. Sullivan, looking down.

“Where else, then—where else, then, can he be gone?” broke out Lady Fermagh, vehemently. “Oh, Mr. Sullivan!—you know—I am sure you know! Where is he?—Tell me, for God’s sake, where can he be gone?”

“I fear he is gone to England.”

“To England! What on earth can have taken him to England!” exclaimed both parents at once.

Mr. Sullivan looked down, and made no answer.

“You know more of this than we do, Mr. Sullivan,” said Lord Fermanagh, with a slight dissatisfaction in his tone.

“To be sure he does,” interfered Lady Fermanagh, “to be sure he must. He is in possession of all Marcus’s secrets. But if not revealed under the seal of confession, for heaven’s sake, Mr. Sullivan, tell us all you know.”

“What I am at liberty to tell is not much,” said Mr. Sullivan, hesitating. “Indeed, it is difficult—I can scarcely say how far—but this, I believe, without trespassing upon my confessional office, I may acknowledge. I fear there has been some entanglement—some attachment in England.”

“Then, in the name of all that’s good, why could you not give us a hint of this before, Mr. Sullivan?”

“My lord, I thought it for the best—my lord, I acted, as I thought, for the best—”

“Acted for the best! In keeping his parents ignorant of such a circumstance



as this, Mr. Sullivan? Well—well.... I thought I perceived an accountable unwillingness, an insurmountable indisposition upon the part of my son, to this match with Miss Vernor. I could not comprehend it—I tried hard to comprehend it—at last I do, but it is too late.”

“But, what do you think he is gone to England for?—What do you think he is gone to England for?” reiterated Lady Fermanagh. “And what is she?—and who is she?—A gentlewoman, I trust—A Catholic, I hope?”

“I believe, a gentlewoman,—but no Catholic.”

“And why, sir, may I ask,” said Lord Fermanagh, sternly, “was I to be kept so long in ignorance of all this? Why was there to be no confidence exchanged between father and son upon a subject so interesting to both? Why, if his heart, and perhaps his good faith, was engaged elsewhere—why was I allowed to persist in the odious task of pressing upon him a match in that case so improper and wretched;—and, apparently for the mere



vile consideration of money? Why was my son to be urged to win an amiable young lady's heart,—an object which, but a quarter of an hour ago, I so greatly rejoiced in thinking he had attained,—and his own no longer in his power? You must answer these questions, Mr. Sullivan, if you please."

"Oh, Fermanagh! — Oh, Fermanagh! How can you—how can you speak so severely? Dear Mr. Sullivan, forgive him, forgive it—He is not himself at this moment. Dear Mr. Sullivan, he forgets himself when he calls you to account in this manner."

"Peace! woman—I do *not* forget myself. I do not see why an account is not to be rendered by Mr. Sullivan as well as by any other man; and I ask him—and I desire an answer to my question—why the father was to be kept in the dark as to the nature of the son's feelings and sentiments in a matter so intensely connected with his honour and his happiness?—And, I have another question or two to ask, also, when he has answered that."

“My lord,” said Mr. Sullivan, attempting to recover himself, and assuming an air of not ungraceful dignity, “I cannot, in justice, be called to render an account to man of the things which belong unto God. In what I did, I thought I was doing God and holy Church—and, I may add, yourself—service. This is all the answer I have to give.”

“Be it so.—Then I request to know—merely as a piece of information for my own guidance—Was my son made aware, or was he not made aware, of this ignorance upon my part of the true state of the case? Did he or did he not believe, that I and his mother were acquainted with the fact that he had a prior attachment, and consequently no heart to give?”

“He believed you *were* aware of that fact.”

“Monster!”

The colour flashed to Lord Fermanagh’s cheek as he uttered the word. He hastily rose, approached the priest, and seizing him by the shoulder, said,

“And did this abominable deception originate in you?”

“Oh Arthur! Oh Lord Fermanagh! My lord!—my lord!—Oh, you forget yourself. Mr. Sullivan—My dear, dear lord!” she exclaimed, endeavouring to throw herself between them, and to relieve the shoulder of her confessor from her husband’s indignant hand. “My lord! My lord! You forget yourself—you forget who it is.”

“I do *not* forget myself, Agnes. I ask of this man—this priest—how he dared permit himself to utter such a base, unworthy falsehood.”

“I uttered no falsehood—no direct falsehood, Lord Fermanagh.—I hope I am as incapable of direct falsehood as you are yourself.”

“Falsehood in act—falsehood in fact!—Oh I know! I know!” cried Lord Fermanagh, releasing the shoulder he held, and shaking off Lady Fermanagh, he cast up his eyes with a look of despair. Then composing himself, and apparently struggling for patience, he returned to his chair

at the other end of the room, and again took up his newspaper. Between Lady Fermanagh and the priest, meanwhile, the following conversation was in a low voice carried on :

“Then you have known of this attachment ever since Marcus’s return ?”

“I have. He confided it to me under the seal of confession, and it was therefore impossible for me to mention it. Afterwards we talked the matter over as friends.”

“But why did he never mention this fact to his father or to me? Did you prevent him? Did you advise him not?”

“In so doing, I thought I prevented much family misery. To suffer him to persist in this engagement to a young lady of a hostile faith, and one very slenderly provided—as he confessed she was—with the means of dissipating the embarrassments—so generously incurred—of this loyal and noble family—was not to be endured. The injustice that would have been committed to a young lady of Miss Vernor’s pretensions, was as little to

be thought of. I believe that I best considered Lord and Lady Fermanagh's happiness, by sparing them the pain of performing the task of opposition which, from considerations like these, I knew they would consider themselves bound to attempt.—Under circumstances so unfortunate, I thought I acted in the best manner for all parties.—If I was mistaken, I cry for mercy.”

A gesture of impatience shook the newspaper in Lord Fermanagh's hand, but he said nothing.

“Then you feel assured that he is gone to England; and for what purpose do you suppose?”

“Nay, I know not. This is more than I can tell. His distress was very great. He was much distressed,—in much suffering when he left me so hastily.”

Mr. Sullivan kept talking, in an hesitating, agitated way,—the tears standing in his eyes, and his voice faltering.

Lord Fermanagh's cheek kindled, then turned white, and the newspaper in his

hand shook much; still he maintained silence.

“Poor dear!—poor boy! What is to be done,—which way is he gone? Surely, surely, he might be followed!—Surely, surely, there is yet time! He might be stopped,—be arrested in his purpose! Follow him, Mr. Sullivan; he will easily be traced, and he has not been gone long. Follow him,—urge him,—lay his father’s commands upon him!—An Englishwoman, and a heretic! Lord Fermanagh! Lord Fermanagh! We are losing time; let Mr. Sullivan set out directly.”

“No,” said Lord Fermanagh, at length breaking silence, laying down the newspaper, and displaying all the grave displeasure written on his pale face. “No, I will not have him interfered with. My son is a man of honour. He does right, having been once deceived, to withdraw his confidence in the representations of any one, and to decide for himself as to the position in which he stands with respect to this young lady in England.



Be she who she may—such I conclude his errand to be?”—with a look of interrogation directed to the priest.

Mr. Sullivan only answered by a humble bend of his head.

“But oh! my lord! Oh! Lord Fermanagh!—a Protestant—a heretic—an Englishwoman! Mr. Sullivan, Lord Fermanagh scarcely knows what he says! Go, for Heaven’s sake, go!”

“I know well what I am saying, and I expect obedience,” said Lord Fermanagh, decisively and sternly. “And I will beg Mr. Sullivan, so far as this affair is concerned, to forbear from any further interference whatsoever, in my family.”

He spoke with an air of authority not to be disputed; and rising from his chair, immediately quitted the room, leaving Lady Fermanagh dissolved in tears, and with a face in which mingled dismay and disapprobation were written. Whilst Mr. Sullivan was humbled to the dust, what between the reproaches of his own

conscience, and the high disapprobation of his conduct thus expressed by one honoured so deeply as he did Lord Fermanagh.

END OF VOL. I.

# NEW WORKS OF FICTION,

By Distinguished Writers.

PUBLISHED BY COLBURN & CO.

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH-STREET.

---

I.

## MRS. MATHEWS; OR, FAMILY MYSTERIES.

By MRS. TROLLOPE.

Author of "Father Eustace," "The Barnabys," &c. 3 vols.

"A production unique in character and of singular merit. This interesting story displays remarkable knowledge of life and motive, and unites with great variety and fertility in the conception of character, greater freedom, energy, and minuteness of delineation, than any other of Mrs. Trollope's novels."—*Morning Post*.

II.

## CECILE, OR THE PERVERT.

By the Author of "Rockingham." 1 vol.

III.

## FALKENBERG.

By the Author of "Mildred Vernon." 3 vols. (Just Ready).

IV.

## THE LIVINGSTONES.

A STORY OF REAL LIFE. 3 vols.

V.

## MARIAN WITHERS.

By GERALDINE E. JEWSBURY,

Author of "Zoe," "The Half Sisters," &c. 3 vols.

"'Marian Withers' will certainly not diminish Miss Jewsbury's reputation."—*Athenæum*

"Full of cleverness and originality."—*Examiner*.

"The best of Miss Jewsbury's novels."—*Critic*.

VI.

## ALBAN. A TALE.

By the Author of "Lady Alice." 3 vols.

VII.

CLARE ABBEY.

By the Author of "The Discipline of Life," &c. 2 vols.

"Lady Ponsonby's 'Clare Abbey' is a delightful book, full of powerful and graceful writing."—*Standard*.

VIII.

THE TUTOR'S WARD.

By the Author of "Wayfaring Sketches," &c. 3 vols.

"'The Tutor's Ward' is a masterpiece of fiction. Rarely has the power of love over the female heart been more beautifully portrayed than in this splendid tale."—*John Bull*.

IX.

THE LADY AND THE PRIEST.

By MRS. MABERLY. 3 vols.

X.

CALEB FIELD.

A TALE OF THE PURITANS.

By the Author of "Passages in the Life of Mrs. Margaret Maitland,"  
"Merkland," &c. 1 vol.

"This beautiful production is every way worthy of its author's reputation in the very first rank of contemporary writers."—*Standard*.

XI.

ARTHUR CONWAY:

OR, SCENES IN THE TROPICS.

By CAPTAIN MILMAN, late Thirty-third Regiment. 3 vols.

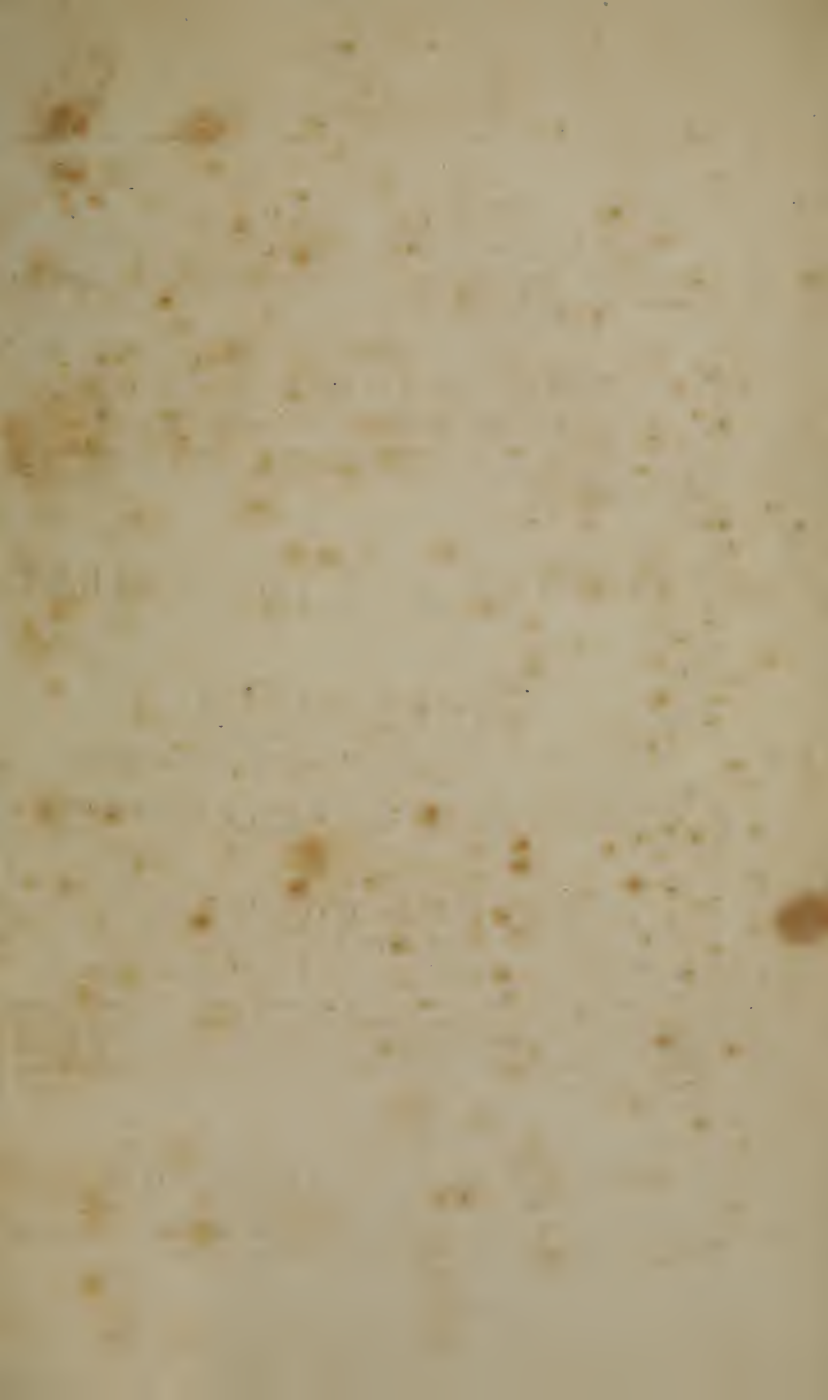
"A book of very rare merit. As a romance, replete with striking and affecting incidents; as a picture of life in the West Indies, as a delineation of tropical scenery, and of the grand and mysterious visitations of Nature, 'Arthur Conway' stands unapproached by any modern work."—*United Service Gazette*.

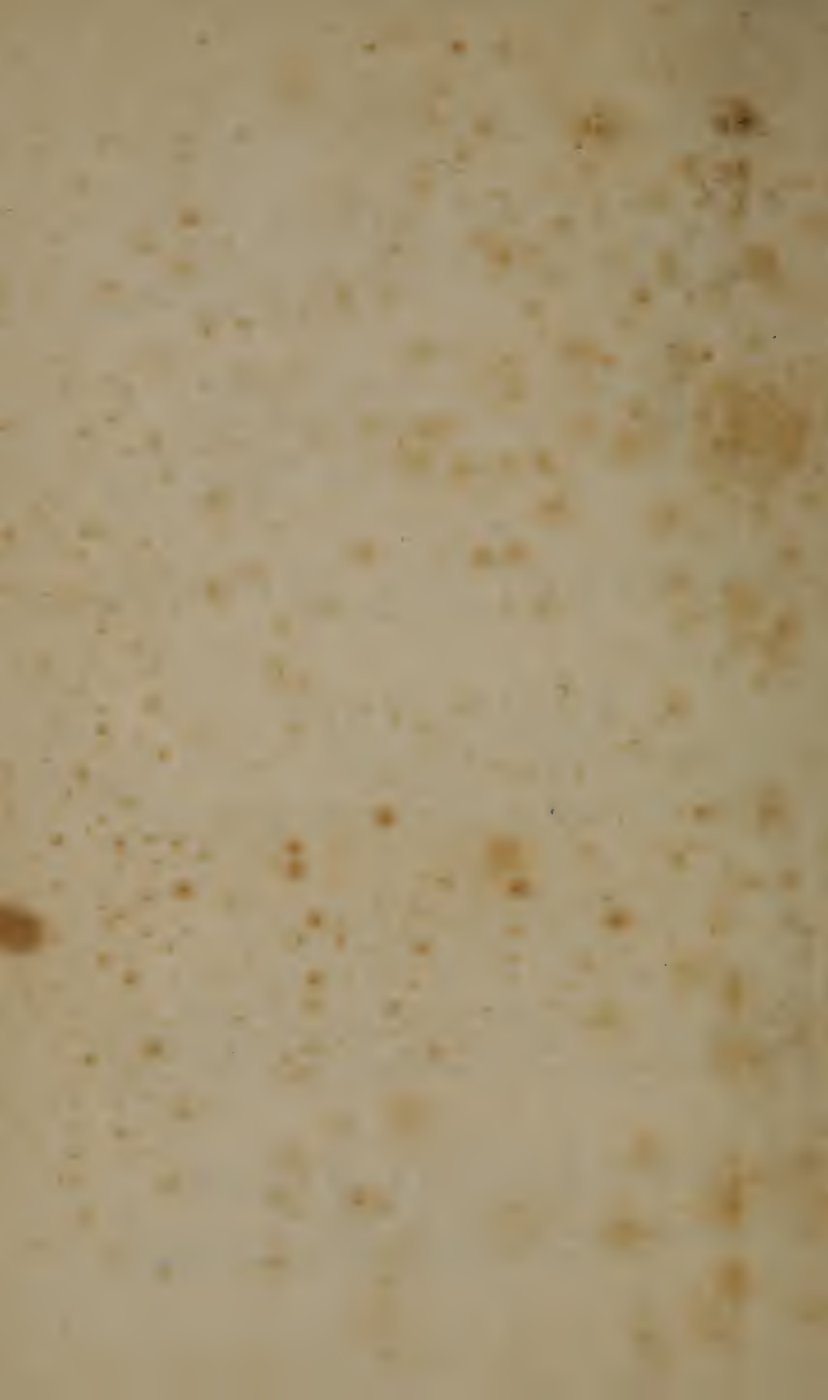
XII.

RALPH RUTHERFORD.

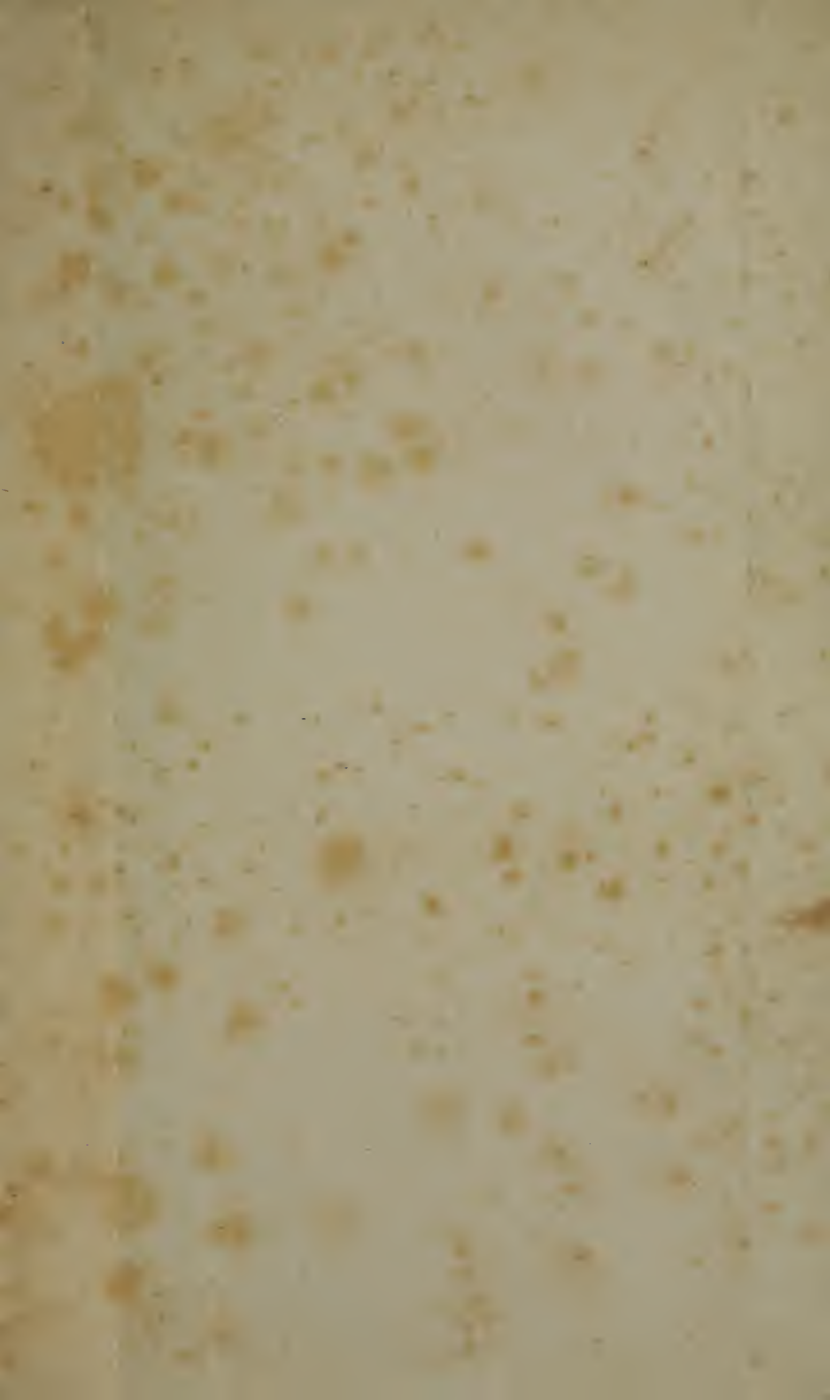
By the Author of "The Petrel," 3 vols.

"Admiral Fisher's 'Ralph Rutherford' is an admirable romance—an interesting addition to our stock of national literature."—*Post*.









UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 051353560